

**A critical investigation into curriculum development  
discourses of academic staff at a South African  
University of Technology**

**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of**

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**of**

**University of Kwa-Zulu Natal**

**by**

**Paulette Powell**

## **Declaration of own work**

I, Paulette Anne Powell, declare that this thesis is my own original work except where otherwise stated and acknowledged.

**Signature**

## **Abstract**

This thesis investigates the curriculum discourses of academics within a University of Technology, exploring their responses to curriculum challenges and considering the degree to which national and institutional shifts contest existing curriculum discourses. Curriculum discourses are identified and discussed against the national and institutional environment and are found, to some degree, to reflect the entrenched assumptions of teaching and learning that were dominant during the apartheid era. Existing curriculum discourses also reveal the influence of curriculum practices adopted within the highly bureaucratic technikon system out of which the institution has evolved.

This critical inquiry rests on the assumption that with more insight into socio-cultural values and assumptions, understandings of knowledge, teaching and learning, and existing power relations within individuals' working context, the possibility of transforming curriculum will be increased. Selecting a small sample of twelve participants from the Durban University of Technology, I conducted in-depth, open-ended interviews intended to explore these academics' curriculum discourses. Adopting discourse analysis as my primary method of data analysis enabled me to explore the discourses which academics use to construct the notion of curriculum and their own roles in regards to the curriculum. Further to this, I used my own experience of the institutional context and the literature on the national and international contexts of higher education to inform the study and add to the richness of the data.

Issues of professional, disciplinary and institutional knowledge and culture are acknowledged to play a central role in participants' curriculum discourses. These socio-cultural factors are found to affect academic identity construction and change, assumptions about knowledge production and dissemination and notions of teaching and learning. These insights are then overlaid onto a consideration of the extent to which academics have the agency to transform their curricula to align with current higher education policy and the societal and economic transformation agenda.

Competing curriculum discourses evident in post-apartheid policy, enormous institutional changes resulting from mandated institutional mergers, changed institutional management team profiles, significantly different student profiles and increased student numbers have all to a large degree overshadowed issues of teaching and learning and led to confusion, disillusionment and uncertainty among the academics participating in this study. There is evidence of a weakening institution-identity with academics feeling uncertain about their roles and responsibilities within the institution, feeling under-valued by the institutional leaders and over-burdened in their workloads with limited support and resources. On the other hand there is a strong identification with workgroups which include both professional and departmental groups that share sets of assumptions and established practices that provide academics with the stability, familiarity, security and affirmation that they need. The issue of individual agency as reflected in the findings, demonstrates that there was a continuum of participant agency that tentatively points to a correlation between the level of agency and the amount of stability and value gained from allegiance to and participation in workgroups.

Despite the increasing pressure upon academics to interrogate their own systems and disciplinary structures that chiefly focus on a traditional mode of specialised knowledge production, there is limited evidence of significantly changed understanding of curriculum practices. Furthermore there is little to suggest that these academics' curriculum practices have been impacted by international trends towards globalisation, marketisation and shifts in modes of knowledge production. Traditional views of knowledge construction and low skills training discourses were strongly evident in the data. With the challenges presented not only by the need for economic and social transformation within South Africa, but also by the need to respond to fast-paced technological and knowledge advancements, exceptional leadership and improved capacity are required to enable rather than inhibit curriculum transformation.

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## Abbreviations and terminology

Within this thesis I shall use South African Department of Labour terminology for racial categorisation which is as follows: *Black* – South Africans of African descent, *White* – South Africans of European descent, *Coloured* – South African mixed race people, *Indian* – South Africans of Asian descent. Although I do not ascribe to the categorisation of people into different ethnic groupings and recognise the contentiousness of such a practice, it is necessary to do so within a review of the historical contextualisation of this study and also within the current South African context where issues of political, educational, social and economic redress are discussed. I have chosen to capitalise the first letter of Black, White, Indian and Coloured throughout the thesis, except within quotes where I have used the authors' preferences.

ANC	African National Congress
AD	Academic Development
CCFO's	Critical Cross-field Outcomes
CHE	Council on Higher Education
CHED	Centre for Higher Education Development
CNE	Christian National Education
COSAS	Congress of South African Students
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CQPA	Centre for Quality Promotion and Assurance
CTP	Committee of Technikon Principals
DUT	Durban University of Technology
DoE	Department of Education
ECC	Education Charter Campaign
FET	Further Education and Training
GET	General Education and Training
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
MDM	Mass Democratic Movement
MIS	Management Information Systems
NATED	National Education (general policy and regulations for instructional programmes)

NECC	National Education Crisis Committee
NCHE	National Commission on Higher Education
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OBE	Outcomes-based education
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
SANSCO	South African National Student Congress
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SAUVCA	South African University Vice-Chancellors' Association
SERTEC	The Certification Council for Technician Education
SGB	Standards Generating Body
SRC	Student Representative Council
UDF	United Democratic Front
UoT	University of Technology

## **Chapter One: Introduction**

### **1.1 Background to the study**

Epistemological and structural shifts in higher education, technological advancements in industry and changed workplace practices present significant challenges to the established curriculum practices of university of technology (UoT) academics. This study, situated within a critical research paradigm, investigates the curriculum discourses of such academics, exploring their responses to the new curriculum challenges and considering the degree to which the shifts are challenging and contesting their academic identities. This chapter begins by explaining how and why my interest in this area of study developed. It then looks at the different change forces (Fullan & Scott, 2009) that are impacting on teaching and learning practices in higher education. Recognising that there are many conceptualisations of curriculum, this chapter moves on to introduce these different ideas about curriculum and to make clear the view taken within this study. The chapter ends with an account of the aims of the thesis and an outline of its structure.

### **1.2 Rationale**

An assumption underpinning this thesis is that in the context of national education reform, advancements in technology and changing workplace practices, curriculum transformation is necessary within the institution from which the study participants are drawn. The investigation that follows is one that rests upon this assumption. While the study considers the influences upon the shape and nature of this transformation and the change readiness of academics, the thesis does not overtly question the necessity of curriculum transformation.

During my time at the Durban University of Technology (DUT<sup>1</sup>) from 1995-2008 as a curriculum developer and member of the academic development unit, the Centre for Higher Education Development (CHED), I worked with capable and creative colleagues at DUT who generally recognised weaknesses in their learning programmes and were willing to engage in curriculum conversations, workshops and projects. Notwithstanding the aforementioned, what I found was that despite the

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<sup>1</sup> I was employed at Technikon Natal in 1995 which became the Durban Institute of Technology in 2002 through a merger with ML Sultan Technikon and finally the Durban University of Technology.

various interventions and initiatives, there seemed to be issues and interactions that impacted on academics' willingness and capacity to engage with meaningful curriculum transformation. It seemed that academics were profoundly influenced by their institutional and disciplinary context, and their academic identities were similarly being impacted by the institutional cultures. My investigation into academics' curriculum discourses considers the extent to which institutional cultures have the power to mitigate against change or provide support for the implementation of change as reflected in the data collected.

The participants in this study were drawn from a range of disciplines, departments and faculties. As a curriculum developer within the institution, I had been involved over a number of years with assisting departments to register their qualifications with the South African Qualifications Authority<sup>2</sup> (SAQA), to prepare new programme applications and to review and make changes to their existing curricula. Within this role, I had some insight into the curriculum challenges facing departments, and was aware of which departments had experienced particular difficulties relating to the merger and which had been under threat of being closed down following a financial viability analysis. Having worked over several years with a range of academics across the institution I had become increasingly frustrated with the slow pace of curriculum change within the institution. There appeared to be different responses to the national and institutional pressure to transform curricula and I became increasingly interested in exploring these responses. In particular, I wanted to explore what academics' conversations would reveal about their curriculum discourses and the underlying assumptions that inform the ways that the participants construct curriculum. This would serve to provide insight into what their understandings of curriculum reveal about the participants' knowledge production

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<sup>2</sup> The South African Qualifications Authority Act (RSA, 1995) vested power in the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), a body of people consisting of a Chairperson and members who have been nominated from a diversity of interests including education, labour, business, universities, technikons, teachers' colleges, technical colleges, adult basic education and training, early childhood development, the teaching profession and special education needs (SAQA, 1997). Its functions are chiefly to register and oversee the registration of qualifications on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

and dissemination assumptions. It would also enable me to understand how they view their roles as curriculum developers within a changing higher education landscape, as well as their notions of teaching and learning within a UoT.

There are many reasons that have persuaded me to believe that curriculum change is necessary. Several 'change forces' (Fullan & Scott, 2009 p.2) currently challenge higher education. These are introduced in this chapter and elaborated on in Chapters Two and Three. Some are broad shifts that are not specific to higher education, but they nonetheless have implications for higher education. With the world becoming smaller, competing markets becoming stronger and the speed and efficiency of information technology increasing, there are demands for shifts in university modes of knowledge production. The extent to which academics' curriculum discourses reflect these shifts from what Gibbons (1997) termed traditional Mode 1 knowledge production to Mode 2 practices that are fashioned to take advantage of and contribute towards the production of knowledge within a wider context is explored in the data analysis. Another trend that is linked to the increasingly global world is marketisation, or the commercialisation of knowledge, which the literature suggests has gained prominence (Kellner, 2005; Bundy, 2006; Clegg, 2009) and is moving institutions away from their core business of teaching and learning to focus on generating income and becoming involved in commercially-driven initiatives. I became interested in exploring the extent to which these global shifts were influencing the ways that academics were constructing curriculum.

Changes nearer to home include those educational reforms that have accompanied the post-1994 political regime. With the abolition of apartheid which legislated racial inequality, there have been numerous developments, including policies and regulations that are shaping curriculum discourses. Despite these reforms at a national level, my experience as a curriculum developer at DUT exposed me to some outdated education curriculum discourses and practices that were deeply entrenched. These can be understood when one considers that many academics working in higher education institutions were themselves educated under the apartheid regime, as were the parents of students at institutions, many of whom are still disadvantaged by the apartheid legacy. I was concerned that our work with

academics to adapt their curriculum approaches was not proving to be very successful, and felt that it would be worth investigating their curriculum discourses. My intention was to discover the extent to which academics were being challenged by the many curriculum changes. This, I felt, would enable the development of change strategies and processes that took into account the assumptions and values underpinning their curriculum responses.

The principles underpinning the introduction of new legislation for higher education, including the establishment of a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and the introduction of outcomes-based learning, are intended to facilitate societal and economic transformation (Department of Education, 1997c). However, there are signs of tension created by competing economic and transformative discourses within new national discourses which are explored in Chapter Two. While technikons have responded to change by widening access and revising policies and procedures to accommodate a diverse student population, Morrow suggests that granting previously disadvantaged learners 'epistemological access' to higher education is often ignored (2007 p.40). What this suggests to me is that more work needs to be done to understand learner challenges and the nature of curricula so that curriculum change can meet learner needs.

Other challenges facing higher education academics are the recent institutional mergers and the restructuring of higher education that included the reclassification of some institutions. The shifts in institutional and departmental cultures that have occurred as a result of these institutional changes suggest that the academic identities of educators are being challenged and that they are having to consider new ways of working. All of these changes suggest that for institutions to meet societal, economic, cultural, technological and intellectual needs, curricula ought to be designed to encourage learners to be problem-solvers, critical thinkers and creative decision-makers. However, the focus on compliance with the bureaucratic and complex requirements of the institutional restructuring has, I would argue, drawn attention away from curriculum transformation, including enquiry into suitable modes of knowledge construction, production and dissemination, the impact of globalisation

and international market trends upon curriculum, analysis of learner needs, and an examination of national and local technology and research needs.

Few would argue that the transformation of education in South Africa was misguided. However, the national reforms have not made explicit the implications for higher education curriculum whose 'content and process of learning' will have to change significantly. There is an expectation that institutions will 'draw on the creativity of their academic communities to design and deliver programmes in response to the framework and goals outlined' (Ekong & Cloete, 1997 pp.3-4). This thesis suggests that this is a misplaced expectation.

### **1.3 Notions of curriculum**

Having recognised the need for curriculum change, I will here briefly introduce various understandings of curriculum (discussed in more detail in Chapter Three) which reflect different world views and epistemological understandings. There are several different conceptualisations of curriculum, ranging from those that are narrow to those that embrace all factors influencing the learning of the student as part of curriculum.

I support Bernstein's (2000) idea that knowledge is not neutral, but is subject to ideological elements that arise from the various interests of those who structure the recontextualising field. Thus, if we as academic developers are going to work with academics to transform curriculum, we need to participate in the process with a sound grasp of the curriculum understandings within our institutions. With clear insight into the values and assumptions underlying established practices, we have more likelihood of being successful.

I use Bernstein's (2000) theory of curriculum and his introduction of a pedagogic device which provides a frame for understanding the complexities within pedagogical relations and communication, and the discourses of knowledges which are deeply entrenched within our institutions and issues of power and control. My own view of transformed curricula within a UoT is that they should facilitate the development of critical and analytical reasoning, communication skills, technological knowledge and

expertise within a chosen field, literacy and numeracy skills, and the capacity to conduct applied research in order to become socially and economically enabled citizens. My critical standpoint has been influenced by the work of Grundy (1987) whose interpretation of the German philosopher and sociologist Jürgen Habermas's social theory, in particular his critical theory of 'knowledge-constitutive interests' (Grundy, 1987 p.7), resonates with me. Habermas identified three different kinds of knowledge-constitutive interests, namely technical, practical and emancipatory, that shape knowledge and inform social organisation (Habermas, 1972). Each of these knowledge interests has been applied to the field of education and gives rise to a different way of knowing. The traditional paradigm has many characteristics in common with Mode 1 knowledge production, viewing knowledge as generated through empirical and observable investigation (Grundy, 1987). The practical interest is described by Habermas and Grundy as oriented towards an understanding of the nature of ongoing social interaction, and the 'fundamental need of the human species to live in and as part of the world' (Grundy, 1987 p.13). The third interest identified by Habermas is the one that informs this study. It is emancipatory and concerned with gaining insights through critical self-awareness that will lead to a transformed consciousness and transformed social and economic values.

Through this exploration of curriculum discourses, I was also interested in discovering whether or not there was any evidence of competing models of curriculum within the institution as this would also have implications for the curriculum strategies which are designed and would suggest that adopting an institution-wide strategy would not necessarily be appropriate. My understanding is that models or conceptualisations are based on the different knowledge interests valued by various groups of academics that work within faculty and departmental groups. Schubert (1986) suggests that the technical approach or knowledge interest has led to an increasingly mechanistic and positivistic technical rationality in curriculum development. Another possibility is that we may see evidence in their discourses of a more hermeneutically inclined position in which the participants display interest in learning through interaction and discovering meaning through text. The third possibility is that some participants may reflect a critical or emancipatory



position through which they encourage learners to engage and inquire in order to encourage a critical awareness of social and economic structures, and power relations. The analysis of the data explores the extent to which the discourses of participants in this study reflect each of these interests in their curriculum approach. Institutions are complex organisations with their own institutional cultures, or sets of inter-connected assumptions and practices. My understanding of culture is that it comprises a set of assumptions, values and established practices reinforced by the recurring practices of a group of individuals in a given context (Becher & Trowler, 2001). In order to successfully implement curriculum change, we need an awareness of the institutional culture as a dynamic and open system that is closely related to 'broader cultural contexts' (Trowler, 2008 p.12). This understanding of institutional cultures is important for appreciating the complexity of introducing innovation and change into an institution.

#### **1.4 Aim of the study**

This socio-cultural investigation is concerned with exploring how academics construct curriculum and what their discourses reveal about their assumptions, values and practices. It rests on the assumption that curriculum is socially constructed and therefore should always be shaped, analysed and understood within its milieu. It is my belief that to discover why curriculum is constructed in particular ways, we need to understand how academics' values, assumptions and practices either work to support change or create barriers that mitigate against change.

In this critical investigation into curriculum development discourses of academic staff at a South African UoT, I focus not only on how these academics are positioned in relation to curriculum reform, but also on understanding the factors that might account for these positions. The research approach attempts to provide a coherent picture of the relationship between context and change and the importance of support and capacity for the implementation of curriculum change. In its exploration of capacity, the study also looks at approaches to knowledge construction and assumptions of teaching and learning. The premise that curriculum is socially constructed entails an understanding that curriculum change is inextricably linked to and impacted by the environment in which it is being implemented. While I focus

specifically on the educational and professional environment within which the academics work, I do acknowledge that there are many other socio-cultural influences that have a part to play in the capacity of individuals to effect change.

The three broad questions this thesis addresses are:

- How do academics construct curriculum?
- What curriculum discourses influence the curriculum approaches of these academic staff and their participation in the curriculum development process?
- What do academics' curriculum discourses tell us about the way forward for curriculum transformation?

Within this study the level of analysis I have chosen to take is what Trowler (2008) refers to as a 'closer focus'. This focus foregrounds the curriculum discourses of academics within a particular higher education institution and places emphasis on exploring the power and agency of individuals within their macro- and meso-level<sup>3</sup> contexts. Drawing from Trowler's (2008) approach, I have adopted what I hope will be read as a 'nested' approach in which the individuals at the micro-level are situated within disciplinary, departmental, professional meso-level workgroups that operate within the broad macro-level framework of institutional, national and international developments. This thesis explores the interplay and flow of power relations (Trowler, 2008) among the different contextual factors at the macro- and meso-levels in order to provide more insight into the complex and often contradictory discourses to which academics are exposed and which understandably influence their change responses. Added to the socio-cultural contexts within which these academics work and which, I will argue, challenge their academic identities, they bring with them their own personal sets of assumptions and values, including their understandings of teaching and learning, their views about students and their disciplinary practices. Having selected this level of analysis, I acknowledge that

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<sup>3</sup> The macro-environment as defined by Trowler (2008) includes the international and national context as well as the broader institutional environment. The meso-level includes workgroups within departments.

‘something is missed wherever one chooses to place the focus of analysis’ (Trowler, 2008 p.55). My approach will be discussed further in the Chapter Four of this thesis.

### **1.5 Structure of the thesis**

Chapter Two of this research report locates the study within its national and institutional context. Moving from past to present, it includes an overview of developments in South African education, specifically within the higher education sector. The purpose is not only to describe significant events, but also to provide insight into those discourses and practices that underpinned apartheid education policy as well as those that have influenced the restructuring of the post-apartheid higher education sector. I then draw attention to the South African technikon environment which has a unique history and the particular characteristics that differentiate it from other providers within the higher education sector. I focus on major structural changes such as the institutional merger between Technikon Natal and ML Sultan Technikon that led to the establishment of DUT, the institutional focus of this case study, and the reclassification of the technikon as a UoT. My purpose in providing this overview is not only to situate the study within its broad macro-level context but also to provide a platform for understanding some of the possible influences upon knowledge construction and the curriculum discourses of academics.

Chapter Three is intended to provide insight into the theoretical underpinnings for this study and begins with a review of the literature around knowledge, pointing to the ongoing debate about the emerging Mode 2 paradigm of knowledge production (Gibbons, 1997), and exploring the relationship between knowledge and curriculum. It suggests that several factors are challenging established university knowledge production practices and encouraging academics to explore new and varied ways of constructing knowledge. The discussion then moves onto a more detailed study of curriculum, making explicit my own curriculum assumptions to provide insight into the understandings guiding my research approach and design. Chapter Three also includes a review of international studies relating to academic identity and the socio-cultural factors that play a role in the construction and maintenance of academic identities. It explores the interplay and flow of power relations (Trowler, 2008) among

the different contextual factors at the macro- and meso-levels in order to provide more insight into the complex and often contradictory discourses to which academics are exposed and which understandably influence their change responses. Particular attention is paid to the importance of understanding the assumptions, values and practices underpinning institutional and workgroup cultures and their influence upon the change positions of individuals.

My methodological choices are discussed in Chapter Four in which I make explicit my own critical positioning within the range of research paradigms before moving on to a discussion of the research design and process selected. It is in this chapter that I discuss my selection of a single case, describe the interview method used for data collection, and discuss my choice of critical discourse analysis as a methodological framework for this study.

Chapters Five, Six and Seven provide the data analysis and discussion. A number of discourses were evident in the data. The three discussed in this analysis were those most directly related to curriculum. These are discourses of change, discourses of identity, and discourses of knowledge and they have been selected for their impact on the ways in which the participants understood and related to curriculum. Taking the view that our curriculum discourses reflect our worldview, in particular our assumptions and beliefs about knowledge and learning, and in line with the research question, this analysis explores how participant responses to change, their views of knowledge and the ways that they construct their academic identity together construct a range of curriculum discourses.

Chapter Eight provides an overview of the findings and explores the implications of the identified curriculum discourses for curriculum transformation.

## **Chapter Two: Context**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Critical theory insists that context binds what is possible and is thus an essential aspect of any study that purports a critical stance. I take the position that curriculum is socially constructed, and that curriculum issues are ‘intertwined with the social and historical contexts of universities and the wider world in which they are situated’ (Barnett & Coate, 2005 p.28), and therefore can only be shaped, analysed and understood within their milieus. For this reason, Chapter Two begins by locating the study within its national and institutional context. It moves from past to present, including an overview of developments in South African education, specifically within the higher education sector. The intention is not simply to describe events from 1948, which marked the start of legislated apartheid, to the current time. My purpose is also to provide insight into those discourses and practices that underpinned apartheid education policy as well as those that have influenced the restructuring of the post-apartheid higher education sector. My decision is based on the view that in order to understand academics’ curriculum discourses, we need to look not only at current contextual influences but also at the assumptions, values and practices from the past that might still impact on their world views, epistemologies and ways of working.

To this end, the chapter moves on to the more recent past, focussing on national policy shifts and important changes for higher education such as the establishment of the NQF and the introduction of an outcomes-based approach to teaching and learning. I then include a brief historical overview of the South African technikon sector which has a unique history and particular characteristics that differentiate it from other providers within the higher education sector. Moving towards the present, I focus on major structural changes such as the institutional merger between Technikon Natal and ML Sultan Technikon that led to the establishment of DUT, the institutional focus of this case study, and the reclassification of the technikon as a UoT. My intention is to explore the data in a later chapter to consider the extent to which the changes discussed here have challenged the academic identity of the study participants and brought into question existing curriculum assumptions, values and practices.

Curriculum practices are inextricably linked with academic identity which is largely constructed and influenced by individuals' working environments. Based on the literature (Kraak, 2001; McKenna 2003; Moore, 2003a) and a reading of education policy, tensions and contradictions existing in current education and training policies and impacting on those who work within the sector can be more easily understood given the extraordinary history of education in this country.

## **2.2 Brief history of apartheid education**

Although this study is designed to focus on current curriculum practices within a post-apartheid South African higher education system, the legacy of apartheid<sup>4</sup> ideology remains with us and impacts upon the work of the sector. Many educators working in higher education institutions were themselves educated under the apartheid regime, as were the parents of students at our institutions. Indeed, I would argue that even the current students find themselves in socio-economic circumstances that owe much to the legacy of apartheid. It is for this reason that I have included this section providing a synopsis of some of those elements of apartheid ideology that guided the provision of education from 1948-1994.

While it can be said that inequalities within South African society existed for many years prior to 1948, it was with the rise to power of the National Party in 1948 that these inequalities became enshrined in segregationist legislation designed to entrench White domination over Blacks, Indians and Coloureds. The concept of unequal allocation of resources was built into apartheid legislation and 'set specific limits on aspects such as housing, education, employment, entertainment, sports, sexual relations within or outside marriage' (Seroto, 2004 p.101). With the formation of the National Party government, Afrikaners became the dominant group in South Africa, exerting a disproportionate amount of political influence (Enslin, 1990 p.79). Of the several Acts promulgated from 1948 to 1994, there are those that held most significance for the shaping of education according to apartheid ideology, most particularly the Group Areas Act No.41 of 1950 which demarcated different

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<sup>4</sup> Apartheid is a term derived from Afrikaans and literally translated as: "apartness". It refers to post-1948 South African ruling party policy that governed relations between South Africa's White minority and Black majority, sanctioning racial segregation and political, educational, social and economic discrimination.

residential locations for the four races (Whites, Coloureds, Indians and Blacks) and restricted the use of facilities by 'non-white' citizens (Seroto, 2004 p.102). This led to the forced removal of those living in the 'wrong' areas.

The other legislation significant for moulding the education system was the Bantu Authorities Act No.68 of 1951 that provided for the establishment of Black reserves, known as 'homelands' to which Black people were assigned according to their records of origin. It was intended that the economic development within these 'homelands' would be focused on the development of modern agricultural practices and the establishment of industry (Behr, 1988). Black people were considered citizens of these "homelands" which were ruled by regional authorities: this meant that they were stripped of their rights as citizens of South Africa.

In 1949 the new government appointed the Eiselen Commission to investigate the state of Bantu<sup>5</sup> education in South Africa. The Eiselen report 'considered that black education should be an integral part of a carefully planned policy of segregated socio-economic development for the black people' (Christie & Collins, 1982 p.59). While this might seem benign, it should be viewed within the context of an apartheid ideology, through which the government had begun a campaign whose intentions were to limit the education of Blacks. In accordance with the recommendations of the Eiselen report, The Bantu Education Act (No. 47) was promulgated in 1953. It provided for the establishment of a separate education department for 'natives' under the control of the Department of Native Affairs. The chief architect of this piece of legislation which was to shape education for decades and from which, I would suggest, South Africa has not yet recovered, was Dr H F Verwoerd, Minister of Native Affairs. In 1954, Dr Verwoerd had this to say about the aim of Bantu Education: 'My department's policy is that education should stand with both feet in the reserves and have its roots in the spirit and being of Bantu society...The Bantu must be guided to serve his community in all respects. There is no place for him in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour. Within his community, however, all doors are open...' (Seroto, 2004 p.112). Although placing

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<sup>5</sup> Bantu was a term for Black people used by the apartheid government.

education under state control resulted in an increase in the numbers of Black pupils in primary schools, the 'deliberate lack of state funding for secondary schools, combined with pervasive poverty, ensured that a massive drop-out rate characterised black schooling' (Samuel, 1990 p.18). In 1953, for every R1 spent on a Black child in school, R7.53 was spent on a White child, and by 1976, for every R1 spent on a Black child, R14.07 was spent on a White child (Christie, 2000 p.110). Inadequate funding for Black education also led to high teacher-pupil ratios (Pillay, 1990 p.37), limited facilities and resources, and poorly paid and inadequately qualified teachers in these schools. In terms of access to higher education, what is significant is that from 1953 to 1989 comparatively few Black pupils reached their matriculation year and of those who did, even fewer succeeded in passing the matriculation examinations that would grant them access to higher education institutions (Samuel, 1990 p.19; Christie, 2000 p.121). This was in keeping with the state's apartheid education policy which was designed to ensure that most Black children would only be equipped for 'unskilled manual labour' while at the same time White children were being prepared 'for an almost complete monopoly of the dominant positions in society' (Samuel, 1990 p.19).

### ***2.2.1 Christian National Education***

While Christian National Education (CNE) began as a movement during the nineteenth century, it was in 1948 that the National Party government formulated the CNE Policy, which was designed to 'justify apartheid and separate development ideology' (Ntshoe, 2002 p.63). This CNE policy was 'exclusivist and chauvinist in that the form of Christianity it invoked implied that White Afrikaners were the chosen race' (Ntshoe, 2002 p.63). The above-mentioned Bantu Education Act was underpinned by the principles of CNE which was 'devoted to the preservation of the Afrikaners as a nation' (Seroto, 2004 p.106) and was used as an instrument of cultural, social, economic and political control. In summary, the CNE policy advocated the preparation of Black people for their station in life, the preservation of the cultural identity of Black people with the guidance of Whites, and the tenets of Calvinism underlying the teaching school subjects (Seroto, 2004 pp.106-107). The paternalistic CNE ideology and rhetoric underpinning Bantu Education were thinly veiled attempts to mask the government's aim of exploiting Black people and



ensuring that they were being prepared to be domestic servants, gardeners and unskilled or semi-skilled blue-collar factory workers and were accepting 'of the allocated social roles' (Kallaway, 1984 p.89). This policy, using religion to separate and discriminate along racial lines, contributed significantly to the inequality of education provision for the different racial groups, over a period of more than forty years. With its underlying premise that Whites were superior to 'non-Whites', it was the ideological framework that shaped educational discourse during the apartheid era<sup>6</sup>. Morrow argues that there is a great deal of overlap between the grammar of CNE and that of logical positivism (1989 p.40). In much the same way that supporters of positivism 'deny that they are engaging in political debate or defending a political position' (Morrow, 1989 p.41) so too did CNE proponents make liberal use of terminology such as 'value-neutral', 'scientific', and 'universally valid' in their descriptions of CNE as an impartial framework.

Through the conception of Fundamental Pedagogics, CNE ideology found a vehicle for its rhetoric. Fundamental Pedagogics, which 'purports to be an approach to educational theory' (Enslin, 1984 p.141), was a theoretical discourse that formed an integral part of apartheid's ideological framework, serving both to justify and to legitimate separate and unequal educational systems for different racial groups. Fundamental Pedagogics is described by its proponents as a view of educational theory as science that they claimed could offer 'a means of establishing "universally valid" knowledge about education' (Enslin, 1984 p.144). What it did, in practice, however, was to reproduce the dominant ideology by endorsing CNE and the values it espoused as the accepted policy on education (Enslin, 1984 p.144). During the apartheid era, Fundamental Pedagogics was widely practised in higher education, particularly in Afrikaans-medium universities. The majority of teachers were themselves educated within this approach, although historically White universities had more autonomy, enabling some of them the freedom to expose student teachers to different ideologies. In teacher-education courses, the practice of Fundamental Pedagogics that served to entrench government ideology was evident in subject

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<sup>6</sup> This statement refers to government educational discourses and does not include reference to alternative discourses that will be discussed later.

syllabuses, prescribed textbooks and readings, the nature of research, and the staffing of education departments (Enslin, 1984 p.145).

Within this system, Black teachers and learners worked in inferior conditions to their White counterparts. These differences were manifest in the inferior design of schools and classrooms, the lack of sports facilities and libraries, the quality or absence of learning materials etc. While they collectively had the potential to act as agents of transformation, any political activism exposed them to the threat of dismissal. At the same time White teachers worked in schools in White areas, and were isolated from the conditions facing their Black counterparts. While that does not excuse what might at best be seen as political lethargy, it does to some extent explain the pivotal role White teachers played in reproducing 'apartheid society and its attendant inequalities' (Enslin, 1990 p.78). According to Enslin, Fundamental Pedagogics failed to illuminate the social and educational order or to suggest ways that teachers might contribute to the formation of a more just society. She states that '[b]y excluding the political as a legitimate dimension of theoretical discourse, Fundamental Pedagogics offers neither a language of critique nor a language of possibility' (1990 p.78). What this meant was that authoritarian values predominated in schools and the curriculum was designed to maintain the status quo.

The Black school population, particularly in primary schools, increased steadily throughout the 1950s to 1980s with inadequate funding and appalling school conditions: classrooms were overcrowded, teachers were under-trained, facilities were poorly maintained, and resources were extremely limited. A campaign of school boycotts began in the 1950s and:

student unrest occurred sporadically in the following two decades. This resistance took various forms, notably the boycotting of classes, the setting fire to the office of the principal or to classrooms and walkouts and "stay-aways". The resistance was however muted and "controllable" (Kallaway, 1984 pp.90-94).

### **2.2.2 The establishment of technikons**

With apartheid ideology pervading schooling, the apartheid plan for education expanded to include higher education. The 1959 Expansion of University Act (Union of South Africa, 1959) legislated that students from different racial and cultural

groups were to be registered only at particular universities allocated to that race or cultural group. Despite some symbolic protests in the form of marches and mass meetings, the Act was passed. At this time, the technikon system had not yet been established. By 1969 the adoption of the Advanced Technical Education Act (No. 40 of 1967) had led to the establishment of six Colleges of Advanced Technical Education (CATEs) to meet the fast growing needs of commerce and industry. It was not until 1979 that the six colleges for advanced technical education evolved into technikons.

These were public institutions whose structures and processes were designed to reflect the social order of the day. Each technikon was assigned a race group to 'service' and further technikons were established to ensure this. As an example, at Peninsula Technikon 'Coloured youth comprised the entire student population initially, though the professional staff were all White' (Chand & Misra, 1999 p.2). Technikon Natal, on the other hand, had an entirely White student and staff population at this stage. In fact, in 1981, technikons comprised 85% white students (Chand & Misra, 1999). With the establishment of technikons, '[t]he National Party government believed that it had been able to identify the essence of each of the two types of institutions into which it divided the South African higher education system' (Bunting, 2001 p.62) and in keeping with its divisive educational policies, it determined that 'universities *could not* become involved in technology (in the sense of the application of knowledge) and that technikons *could not* become involved in scholarly activities involving the generation of new knowledge' (Bunting, 2001 p.62).

During the 1980s there was pressure from big business for increased training of Blacks. Whether for economic, ideological or political reasons, industry was concerned at the shortages of Black technical, managerial and professional expertise (Badat, 1991). It was believed that a Black middle-class could be important intermediaries between capital and labour and could help to resolve any conflicts between them (Badat, 1991). There followed expansion in enrolments at Black universities, technikons and tertiary colleges, with corporate organisations making donations to these institutions and providing bursaries for Black students to study both in South Africa and overseas. At White English speaking universities, 'black

students began to constitute a sizeable sector of the general student body' and were thus able to 'shape the form and content of educational and political struggles on these campuses' (Badat, 1991 p.82). Between 1985 and 1990 Black students began to enter technikons that had been reserved for Whites and by 1990, Black students comprised 19% of the student body at ML Sultan Technikon which had previously been designated for Indian students. Despite these increases, by 1990, White students still constituted 64.5% of total technikon enrolments (Badat, 1999).

### **2.2.3 Black Consciousness Movement<sup>7</sup>**

The move towards non-racial higher education provision occurred as a result of pressure from big business and the growing Black Consciousness Movement. Despite the power of the ruling group which was exerted through 'control of a formidable repressive and ideological state apparatus' (Enslin, 1990 pp.80-81), there was growing resistance to the dominant discourse. In the 1970s the Black Consciousness Movement was formed and took root at universities. It soon spread into a more general and important resistance movement, standing for 'a rejection of white domination in all its forms – political, economic, psychological and cultural' (Christie, 1991 p.236). The well-known Soweto Uprising of 1976 raised international awareness and marked a shift in the nature and intensity of the resistance movement as well as in the regime's response to such protests. A number of student organisations began to emerge and mobilise both tertiary students and school pupils. Ironically, Black universities established by the government 'to produce and domesticate emerging black elites, made higher education an important terrain of student mobilisation, ideological debate, and resistance' (Reddy, 2004 p.6). Black township schools became key sites of struggle, with 'fierce and often violent anti-apartheid protests' held in schools throughout South Africa, and the protest slogan 'Liberation before Education' becoming 'the battle call for the liberation movement' (Ntshoe, 2002 p.64).

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<sup>7</sup> Black Consciousness was an anti-apartheid resistance movement that included Blacks, Indians and Coloureds.

Education is '*the* critical institution in the social control function of the state because it can help to produce and to legitimize patterns of social inequality and mobility through its provision of a suitable rationale' (Salter & Trapper, 1981 p.7), and it was clear that apartheid education was failing to provide that suitable rationale. Thus, under pressure from changing economic, social and political forces, the state responded to the crisis by implementing some reforms to try and rescue their control over the situation. In an effort to show that the government was dealing with the crisis in Black education, the Education and Training Act (DET, 1979) was passed to replace the Bantu Education Act of 1953 (Union of South Africa, 1953). This meant that Black education was to function under the auspices of the Department of Education and Training (DET).

Within the university and technikon sector, student resistance to the apartheid regime was impeded by the divisive nature of universities with specific population and language groups allocated to particular institutions. At technikons, which had been established as institutions designed to support apartheid ideology and which fell within the state mechanisms and control, students were denied the right to establish independent Student Representative Councils (SRC) and student organisations. Furthermore, there was increased security policing entrances at institutions, and at the first sign of student protest the riot police were called onto campuses (Badat, 1999). Although several of the White English-medium universities claim to have taken a vigorous anti-apartheid stance, there is some doubt as to the accuracy of these claims, and clear evidence that they 'shared the dominant practices and values of the racist society of which they were a part' (Reddy 2004 p.15).

There were, however, individual academics who 'carved out within university structures spaces for alternative, anti-apartheid activity' (Reddy, 2004 p.20). The internal environment also added to the restrictions, with densely packed timetables and lecturers 'limited by the dictates of completing a regular syllabus' allowing few opportunities within classrooms for 'the undermining of the undemocratic and authoritarian nature of apartheid education' (Naidoo, 1990 p.137). Another obstacle was the fact that many of the university students were products of a debilitating

education system and 'their ability to transcend this actuality' (Naidoo, 1990 p.137) was constrained.

The state's programme of restructuring which had begun soon after the Soweto uprising of 1976 and the increasing intensity of the resistance campaign, involved a 'dual process of repression and reform' seeking to 'neutralise opposition and restore legitimacy to the ruling class' (Swainson, 1991 p.100). By 1985 the programme of restructuring was collapsing in the face of continuing mass resistance, and President P W Botha's unyielding Rubicon Speech in August 1985 led to further disillusionment and a general loss of confidence in the South African economy (Swainson, 1991 p.106). Efforts to increase pressure on and further isolate the apartheid government were intensified through boycotts, sanctions and disinvestment (Badat, 1999). Although a number of academics belonged to liberation organisations and actively supported the anti-apartheid campaign, Badat (1999) asserts that campuses were generally dominated by liberal and conservative academics and SANSCO was of the view that White institutions contributed significantly to the reproduction of the existing apartheid regime through both their research and teaching. In 1987 the government responded to student protests on higher education campuses by demanding that university vice-chancellors and rectors impose the State of Emergency conditions<sup>8</sup> on their campuses and to report all incidents to the government. In the light of the state's evident intransigence and the 1985-86 militant resistance against apartheid structures, corporate organisations began to initiate their own reforms which included the sponsorships and the increased provision of bursaries to Black, Indian and Coloured students to facilitate their entry and success within higher education institutions.

Simultaneously, within the resistance movement the focus moved towards 'the development of an alternative people's education' (Levin, 1991 p.117). Arising out of a resistance to the apartheid regime, alternative education focussed on the link between education, politics and social change as a means to achieving a just

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<sup>8</sup> The government imposed States of Emergency from 1986 – 1990 in an attempt to suppress organisations and individuals deemed to be subversive. State of Emergency conditions in higher education institutions included preventing unlawful gatherings, boycotts, promotion of outlawed political organisations, promotion of consumer boycotts, and worker strikes (Badat, 1999).

society. Paulo Freire's Pedagogy for Liberation was studied, and resistance to 'banking education', a Freirian term emphasising the teacher's role as the active one in the teacher-learner relationship, grew (Naidoo, 1990 p.129). Naidoo suggests that through the growing student militancy, and despite enormous difficulties, 'a developing revolutionary and progressive praxis definitely exist[ed] among the politically active students' (1990 p.123). Criticisms of the curriculum inevitably led to tensions between students and teachers, with each group having its own interests. Although some progressive teachers were involved in resistance initiatives, in the main they were seen to be part of the establishment. 'As a result, many schools failed to function as centers of learning and many were eventually shut down' (Ntshoe, 2002 p.64). The struggle for liberation found expression in the National Education Crisis Committee in 1986, and was later transformed into the National Education Coordinating Committee (NECC), which was part of the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM) (Adams, 2006). The MDM, formed out of an alliance between the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), launched a defiance campaign aimed at resisting restrictions on individuals and organisations and a refusal to accept segregated institutions and facilities (Badat, 1999). Both parents and students worked together to intensify the struggle, and the concept of People's Education for People's Power was born. However, with increasing state oppression as well as a 'considerable lack of clarity over precisely what it [People's Education] meant' (Levin, 1991 p.125), the implementation of People's Education plans and programmes had only limited success. Despite this, as a political project it 'managed to retain some measure of ideological ascendancy in education' (Levin, Moll & Narsing, 1991 p.232).

1989 is often referred to as a watershed year in terms of a marked shift in power relations between the state and the anti-apartheid organisations (Bunting, 2001). Several key campaigns were launched, including most significantly, a mass hunger strike undertaken by political detainees who demanded immediate release from prison (Badat, 1999) which mobilised increased mass student protests.

While dialogue between the ANC elite and business corporations, non-governmental organisations and other stakeholders had begun some years before, towards the

end of the 1980s, the apartheid government began informal talks with the ANC, and Nelson Mandela in particular, suggesting the beginning of a new era in which a new 'democratic discourse' (Reddy, 2004 p.29) was to develop. On 2 February 1990 expectations were raised when the De Klerk government announced the release of Nelson Mandela, the unbanning of struggle organisations and the start of negotiations towards a new non-racial dispensation.

The macro-political and macro-economic changes that were negotiated following the release of Mandela formed the backdrop against which post-1990 discussions about educational change took place. In a country where education had been 'the servant of the ideology of apartheid and economic domination' (Hartshorne, 1992 p.333), there were intense negotiations and discussions culminating in a 1996 report of the National Commission on Higher Education<sup>9</sup> (NCHE, 1996) which set out proposals to reform the Higher Education sector. This report stated 'that higher education can play a pivotal role in the political, economic and cultural reconstruction and development of South Africa.' (NCHE, 1996 p.1). The higher education institutions were to be transformed to change 'skill and knowledge requirements for improved productivity and innovation, and the needs associated with the building of a new citizenry' (NCHE, 1996 p.24). Despite severe criticism over its silence about the 'Africanisation of higher education, for marginalizing and silencing the views of some stakeholders, for not developing any proposals on curriculum development and language policy, and for not going far enough to redress past racial imbalances' (Reddy, 2004 p.38), its recommendations informed higher education policy after 1994.

### **2.3 Developments in education after 1994**

By 1994, the fragmented and uncoordinated public higher education landscape comprised thirty six institutions which included seven historically disadvantaged<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> The NCHE was established in 1995 to advise the Minister of Education on restructuring higher education to contribute towards reconstruction and development.

<sup>10</sup> 'Historically disadvantaged' is a term frequently used in post-apartheid South Africa to refer to institutions that were established by the apartheid government to cater for Black, Indian and Coloured students and resourced accordingly.



technikons and seven historically advantaged<sup>11</sup> technikons, ten historically disadvantaged universities and ten historically advantaged universities, as well as two distance institutions. The first post-apartheid government elected in 1994 was therefore faced with a higher education system needing enormous reform to rid itself of its entrenched racial divisions and unequal provision.

Many powerful stakeholders including government, industry, trade unions, training boards, and other interest groups exerted pressure and influenced the design of the post-1994 South African education system. Curriculum transformation in higher education today is informed and driven by the *Education White Paper 3 – A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education*, published on 24 July 1997 and the subsequent *Higher Education Act*, passed on 26 November 1997. The White Paper outlines the broad national policy framework for Higher Education, including the transformation of the higher education system to redress past inequalities, serve a new social order, meet pressing national needs and respond to new realities and opportunities (Department of Education (DoE), 1997a). As with all other education policies, this White Paper must be understood within the context of societal and economic transformation driven by the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) which presented a vision of people-driven development leading to the building of a better quality of life for all (DoE, 1997a). It is stated within the White Paper that the higher education system is to be planned, governed and funded as a single national co-ordinated system. The fundamental principles underpinning this process of transformation, as stated in the Education White Paper 3, are those of equity and redress; democratisation and increased participation; development; quality; effectiveness and efficiency; academic freedom; institutional autonomy; and public accountability. There is also an acknowledgement that ‘higher education has to be internally restructured to face the challenge of globalisation’ (DoE, 1997a). This policy document was influenced by the 1996 NCHE report and subsequently the National Plan for Higher Education was published by the Department of Education in 2001 was also published. The National Plan focused on the restructuring of higher education to deal with a changing economy by equipping ‘a developing society with

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<sup>11</sup> ‘Historically advantaged’ is a term frequently used in post-apartheid South Africa to refer to institutions that were designated for the registration of White students during the apartheid era and resourced accordingly.

the capacity to address national needs and to participate in a rapidly changing and competitive global market' (DoE, 2001 p.6).

There was widespread recognition before the 1994 election of the new Government of National Unity in South Africa, that education and training reform was needed to redress the imbalances of the apartheid system which provided unequal access to and provision of education and training. There existed a perception that national standards for education and training were required to promote equity and redress, to stimulate productivity and economic competitiveness, and to improve the quality of learning. 'There was increasing dissatisfaction in trade and industry (on the part of both Labour and Management) because the education and training system was lagging so far behind its international counterparts' (South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), 1997 p.3). Furthermore there was acknowledgement of the inefficiency and irrelevance of much education and training, and frustration caused by complex systems of certification that created artificial barriers to progress in learning and work (SAQA, 1997). These factors led to the establishment of a South African National Qualifications Framework (NQF) which was driven by unions and the Department of Labour, and contested and refined by representatives from labour, management, government and providers of education and training. In the section that follows my focus will be on outlining the intentions of the NQF as this is the framework within which current qualifications are designed and registered.

### ***2.3.1 The establishment of a National Qualifications Framework (NQF)***

The idea of a NQF was driven by powerful interest groups which significantly influenced the design of the framework. The introduction of a qualifications framework with an underpinning outcomes-based philosophy had not previously been discussed within African National Congress (ANC) education documents and caught education off-guard. This has resulted in a lasting tension around the NQF and its implementation. Despite some misgivings about the wisdom of introducing a framework that would include higher education qualifications, agreement was reached on the concept of transparent national standards housed within a qualifications framework. The NQF was legally established to provide for the registration of national standards and qualifications, and the passing of the South

African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Act created the platform for the development of an education and training system intended to address human resource development, learner-centredness, relevance, differentiation, redress and learner support, nation-building and non-discrimination, critical and creative thinking, flexibility, progression, credibility, and quality assurance. The SAQA Act (1995) outlined a structural framework including the NQF which had been introduced as a transformative mechanism linking education and training and which was viewed by South African educationalists as 'an important part of the transition to democracy, and has been symbolic of the development of a single education system for all South Africans' (Allais, 2003 p.306). For the first time in South Africa, there is a system that attempts to link education and training through an NQF that is overseen by the SAQA and intended to contribute towards the full personal development of each learner and the social and economic development of the nation at large. This national framework for learning was designed with access, mobility, progression, redress and improved quality as key underlying principles (SAQA, 1995). All qualifications offered by accredited providers of education and training are registered and form part of the NQF.

Another key objective underpinning the development of the new education and training system was the intention to increase access to higher education. Morrow warned that an end to apartheid would not necessarily mean the remaking of a social world that would 'fit in with our utopian visions' and the expectation of open access to higher education institutions would, for the foreseeable future, be constrained by limited 'public resources for higher education' (2007 p.38). His view is that there are two aspects of access to higher education, one of which is the granting of formal access to higher education institutions by providing increased opportunities for access through the acknowledgement of the need for social justice and redress for people from previously disadvantaged communities. To a large degree, statistics of student demographics at higher education institutions would indicate that there has been considerable success in developing institutional policies and procedures that have expanded access to higher education for previously disadvantaged students. This increased access is seen to be important given a widely held view that higher education is a 'greatly prized good' (Morrow, 2007 p.39), valued for its potential to

enhance the general quality of recipients' lives, and also for the benefits that will 'pervade the whole society' (Morrow, 2007 p.40). The second aspect has to do with what Morrow refers to as 'epistemological access' to higher education. This is the issue 'of how the institution provides access to the goods it distributes to those it formally admits' (Morrow, 2007 p.39). In our efforts to increase formal access to higher education with limited resources, this is frequently ignored.

The implementation of the South African NQF has been widely criticised. There has been mounting frustration about the system's complexity and bureaucracy, the time-consuming and confusing processes involved in registering qualifications and accrediting providers, and the proliferation of acronyms and jargon (Departments of Education and Labour, 2002 p.143). An added issue that Allais (2007) raises is that the process of generating qualifications has been time consuming and costly, but have not been significantly used. Reddy states that '[i]mplementing these policies has proven to be a slow, arduous and ambiguous process; impressive gains sit alongside old patterns reproducing themselves both within the higher education sector and in the relations between this sector and society' (2004 p.40).

Luckett and Webbstock suggest that the purposes of the NQF 'are based on a grand narrative which assumes that education and training can be integrated, packaged and bought and sold in such a way that lifelong learners will leave the education and training system as highly employable, productive workers in possession of a range of desirable generic, transferable skills' (1999 p.3). What has in fact been seen since the establishment of the NQF is that those individuals already employed have, to some extent, been able to benefit from training opportunities provided through the new education and training system, while unemployed individuals have not been able to access these opportunities as easily.

The strong integrationist discourse operating within the NQF is also evident in national policy for the General (GET), Further (FET) and Higher (HET)<sup>12</sup> education and training bands, as reflected in the combination of education and training within a

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<sup>12</sup> The NQF is made up of three Bands or levels, beginning with the GET, advancing to the FET and ending in the HET Band.

single coordinated band. It is apparent that some of the principles, beliefs and values expressed within the Introduction to the *Curriculum Framework for General and Further Education and Training* document link it to a critical orientation (DoE, 1996b).

### **2.3.2 OBE and curriculum construction**

The implementation of the NQF raises questions and concerns about its bearing upon the roles that academics play in the construction of curriculum. Although the structure provides a frame within which curriculum is designed, it is incumbent upon academics to construct their own curriculum. Decisions about curriculum structure and content remain the responsibility of academics whose curriculum discourses, this thesis argues, are reflected in the approaches they adopt.

Within South Africa, OBE was introduced as a transformative approach designed to move educators away from content and input-based curricula to an approach that would place the focus upon the achievement of learning outcomes (Allais, 2007). To summarise the assumptions underlying an outcomes-based approach to curriculum design, the emphasis is placed on the learner, with the educator facilitating the learning. The intention is also to encourage critical thinking and problem solving, and to provide a consistent standard for the end result of learning while enabling more flexibility among providers to develop diverse curricula and to use teaching and learning approaches appropriate for their contexts. Proponents of OBE have suggested that this approach encourages educators to use a wide range of teaching styles, methods, and other resources that will promote learning. This approach places different demands on their pedagogical skills (Burke, 1995) and educators have to critically reflect on their own practice before they can effect the changes necessary.

In considering the appropriateness of adopting an outcomes-based approach to the design of learning programmes within higher education, it is necessary to examine the nature and characteristics of this approach, and particularly on the way it has been interpreted and implemented in South Africa. The South African system has followed the international shift in the way educational and training quality is determined. Previously, the conventional wisdom judged quality in terms of inputs:

intentions and efforts, institutions and services, resources and spending. In the last several years, however, there has been an increasing focus on outputs: goals and ends, products and results, with a focus on core competencies.

South Africa borrowed many of its ideas about outcomes-based education from developed Western countries, such as Canada, Australia, America and Britain where the history and nature of education is vastly different from our own. In particular, South Africa adopted the outcomes-based version espoused by William Spady, an American who visited South Africa during the 1990s to promote and elucidate the approach. Spady distinguished between traditional, transitional and transformational OBE, the last of which South Africa claimed to be adopting although the distinctions were rather meaningless (Jansen, 1999b). Confusion abounded as OBE discussions in workplace training, higher education and schooling developed different languages. This divergence points to the insularity of OBE development within different education and training sectors (Jansen, 1999b). Jansen (1999b) criticises the poor political and bureaucratic management of education policy during this time of transition. OBE was presented to South Africans as a benign and sensible approach but it is criticised for being closely linked with the current international trend towards neo-liberal economic policy which through its focus on 'market-oriented orthodoxy' has served to redefine the purpose of education and the 'notion of world-class standards' against which students must perform (Allais, 2003 p.9). The focus on global competitiveness and the need for education to be responsive to a changing international market has been an ideal breeding ground for the birth of competency based approaches in education.

The increasingly dominant role that the state has taken (Kraak, 1999) in higher education governance culminated in Cabinet's adoption in May 2002 of 'government proposals for transformation and reconstruction of the higher education system, including a programme of extensive institutional restructuring arising from the recommendations of the National Working Group' (Hall & Symes, 2003 p.5). This restructuring had an immense impact on the technikon sector.

### **2.3.3 Restructuring the Higher Education sector**

The impact of globalisation, technology transfer and, in South Africa, a government committed to ridding the higher education sector of the divisions within it, all placed pressure on this sector to transform. The boundaries, rooted in the social order of apartheid, had clearly become unacceptable within the changed context, and the new government policy framework sought to address issues of fragmentation and inequity within the higher education sector. Jansen states that 'the founding policy document on higher education after apartheid is the report of the National Commission on Higher education (NCHE) - A Framework for Transformation' (2004 p.294). The report was the culmination of a process of investigation and consultation that began with the establishment of the NCHE in February 1995. Included in the NCHE's terms of reference was the undertaking to advise the minister on the size and shape of higher education (DoE, 1996a). The Commission's report pronounced that 'the system should recognise, in name and in broad function and mission, the existence of universities, technikons and colleges as types of institutions offering higher education programmes. But these institutional types should not be regarded as discrete sectors with mutually exclusive missions and programme offerings' (NCHE, 1996 p.16). The *Education White Paper 3 – A Programme for Higher Education Transformation*, published on 24 July 1997 and influenced by the NCHE report, outlined the broad policy framework for higher education and stated that the higher education system was to be planned, governed and funded as a single national co-ordinated system.

There was a concern that the closely-guarded autonomy of universities was being undermined by these government initiatives. Kemmis (1998) cautions that education is increasingly being functionally integrated into the imperatives of the economy and occupational system and the political and legal administrative systems, under the influence of the steering media of money and administrative power (in McKenna & Sutherland, 2006 p.18).

Despite the NCHE recommendation that the higher education landscape should include a range of diverse institutions, there were soon other growing concerns, including the view that the notion of a single unified system was leading to an

increasingly uniform provision within higher education. Kraak refers to 'academic drift', which he describes as 'unintended and often opportunistic movement of technikon-type institutions up the qualification hierarchy and across the academic/vocational divide in search of new learner markets, programme fields and income sources. In moving upwards in this way, institutions such as technikons begin to mimic key attributes of university-based institutions' (2006 p.142). There has been an element of 'double-drift', as both university and technikon programmes have seemed to be moving across the 'academic/vocational divide'. As technikons have drifted closer to universities, so too are universities increasingly offering programmes that include practical experiential learning components, previously largely the domain of technikons.

As a way of reviewing the higher education landscape, the Minister of Education requested the Council on Higher Education (CHE) to provide him with a set of concrete proposals on the shape and size of the higher education system. *'Towards a New Higher Education Landscape: Meeting the Equity, Quality and Social Development Imperatives of South Africa in the 21st Century'*, came out of the work done by the CHE-established Size and Shape Task Team and is usually referred to as *'The Size and Shape Report'*. In this document, the CHE reported that, 'the inherited system is not effectively responding to the new needs of the country and it is essential to reconfigure it to serve the new democracy' (Council on Higher Education (CHE), 2000). There was also recognition by the CHE appointed task team that 'the pervasive dysfunctionality that characterizes parts of the higher education system reduces its great potential' (CHE, 2000). This 'dysfunctionality' was spelt out and the problems identified included the poor student retention and success rates, skewed racial and gender distribution of academic and administrative staff, and students in certain fields, fragile management capacity and low research outputs at most institutions. One of the most controversial recommendations in the *National Plan for Higher Education* (DoE, 2001), influenced by *'The Size and Shape Report'* mentioned above, was the proposed implementation of 'a new three-tiered institutional landscape'. The three institutional types were defined primarily by prescriptions imposed on their core teaching and research functions' (Kraak, 2006 p.141). Given the concerns expressed in the report, as well as the urgent need to



avoid institutional uniformity to deal with diverse national human resource demands, one of the intentions of the *National Plan for Higher Education* (DoE, 2001), was to shape the sector into one that would better address the social and economic needs of South Africa. This is expressed in its strategic objectives, one of which was 'to ensure diversity in the organisational form and institutional landscape of the higher education system through mission and programme differentiation' (DoE, 2001 p.15). Through this National Plan, the Ministry expressed concern that despite its request for 'institutions to locate their plans within a strategic framework informed by the institution's location and context and its strengths and weaknesses' it was evident 'that many institutions aspire to a common "gold" standard as represented by the major research institutions, both nationally and internationally' (DoE, 2001).

The CHE recommended that the restructuring of the higher education system to ensure its sustainability, including in particular, the efficient and effective use of resources, required a reduction in the 'present number of institutions through combining institutions' (CHE, 2000 pp.56-7). The Ministry agreed 'that the sustainability and transformation of the higher education system requires a reduction in the number of institutions' (DoE, 2001) and after an 'intensive political process' (Jansen, 2004 p.296) and wide contestation, the institutional mergers and incorporations were finalised. Resistance to the mergers was widespread, with the voice of the technikon sector, expressed through the CTP being amongst the most vociferous. Some examples of this resistance can be seen in documents released by the CTP, 'The technikon sector is facing the greatest challenge to its existence since its establishment in 1979'; 'Proceeding with mergers which are illogical, irrational and costly....might deal Higher Education a fatal blow'; 'To cut down the number of technikons would deal a severe blow to the thousands who are already finding it difficult to gain access to higher education' (Committee of Technikon Principals (CTP), 2002a p.6); and '[p]rospective mergers will further complicate any rational distinction between institutions' (CTP, 2002b p.3). Barney Pityana, Vice-chancellor and Principal of UNISA, claims that the policy on mergers 'as a tool towards restructuring the higher education landscape in South Africa has been very controversial. Controversial because it was predicated on assumptions that many of us consider contentious and lacked rational focus' (Pityana, 2004 p.5).

Despite the dissension, the mergers went ahead and there are now eleven universities (there were twenty-one universities), seven universities of technology (there were fifteen technikons), and five comprehensive institutions (largely the result of mergers between technikons and universities).

It is true that the South African higher education policy framework has driven these changes in higher education, making it clear that higher education institutions would have to rethink their values and practices, and to create learning environments that would 'serve a new social order, [to] meet pressing national needs, and [to] respond to new realities and opportunities' (DoE, 1997a p.3). However, besides this national imperative to transform, other factors have also influenced the transformation agenda. Pityana points out that 'the pressures of the market economy and the speed of the information society' are also factors influencing the redefining of universities so that they are able to 'respond appropriately to visions set' (2004 p.1). What is significant is that the single system resulting from the new policy framework encompasses differentiations 'derived not from some historically acquired institutional role but via programmes which would be identified through systematic planning and coordination in order to steer the entire national system in directions consonant with national socio-economic priorities' (Kraak, 2006 p.138).

#### ***2.3.4 The case of the Durban University of Technology (DUT)***

DUT, which is the institutional case being studied in this thesis, was formed as a result of an institutional merger. In 2002 ML Sultan Technikon and Technikon Natal were merged to become the Durban Institute of Technology. During the apartheid system, ML Sultan was established to serve the Indian community, while Technikon Natal was intended to serve White English-speaking students. Thus, while only separated by a fence, these two institutions served students with very different cultural profiles and teaching staff were also largely drawn from the same cultural groups as the students. It is from within this merged institution that participants in my study have been drawn. The challenges they faced as a result of the merger are more fully discussed in Chapter Five.

In addition to the merger, another significant change that has impacted on academic staff is the reclassification of the institution as a University of Technology (UoT). Although UoTs had been conceptualised some years earlier, the current government only granted permission for technikons to change their status to UoTs in 2003, at a time when the higher education sector was undergoing several dramatic changes as described above. During the time of discussions between the CTP and the Minister of Education (CTP, 2003a) there were very particular reasons for promoting the change of institutions from technikons to UoTs. While some of these related to market perceptions of technikons, both nationally and internationally, there were other reasons given for advocating the change (CTP, 2004; du Prè, 2006; Winberg, 2005).

### ***2.3.5 Becoming a university of technology***

Kraak states that 'one of the defining features of the ex-technikon sector in South Africa has been its production of skilled personnel to meet the intermediate skill needs of the national economy' (2006 p.135). Further evidence of their over-riding purpose to meet 'intermediate skills needs' is manifest in the nature of their offerings, particularly prior to 1993 when they were not entitled to offer post-graduate programmes. With the rapid advancement of technology and the growing need for high-level industry-focused programmes, a judicious and timely decision was made (DoE, 1993) to extend technikon programmes to include under-graduate and post-graduate degree-awarding offerings and to encourage the advancement of applied research for the benefit of the industries it served. Prior to this, technikons had only been able to offer two year certificates and three year diplomas. Clearly this impacted on their capacity to conduct research, as Ogude, Netswara and Mavundla (2001 p.4) state that '...technikons could neither attract the calibre of students to enrol for postgraduate degrees nor the staff members who could conduct research and supervise postgraduate studies. This was a major impediment for the prospect of research development at technikons'. Chand and Misra (1999) suggest that the granting of degree-awarding status has played a large part in bringing the universities and technikons closer as there is now a possibility of movement at post-graduate level between these two types of institutions.

The CTP described technikons as providing:

a broad variety of learning opportunities focused on the needs of a developing economy, they also have an ethos of being more employer-centred and are continuously striving to make their students more competent, more employable, more directly supportive of entrepreneurial activities and economic growth (CTP, 2003b p.2).

The central thrust and purpose of technikons seemed to be their very strong ties with industry and their commitment to providing education and training that included workplace experience (now called work-integrated learning) as part of their programmes, to produce work-ready graduates. There were questions around why there was a need to change the status of technikons when their role and functions had been clearly defined and widely recognised within South Africa.

Given the pressure on the higher education sector to meet national economic and social imperatives, it is inevitable that the boundaries between university-type programmes and ex-technikon-type programmes have become more permeable. The trend towards increased flexibility and permeability is not unique to South Africa. Referring to international trends in higher education, Ramsden states that '[d]ifferences between types of post-secondary institutions are becoming more permeable and fuzzy, and priorities can no longer be derived from single ideals such as the university as a liberal community of scholars, or the polytechnic as a training ground for the 'real world' (1998 p.32). So what then distinguishes UoTs from universities?

The technikon movement's repeated and urgent requests to the Ministry for permission to become UoTs, as recorded in CTP documents, focused chiefly on perceptions, both national and international, about the name 'technikon': 'the name still has connotations with the apartheid era and the binary system in which it existed' and '[w]ith the onset of globalisation and the technikons' drive towards internationalisation and optimal utilisation of South Africa's brainpower and creative skills, the name has become a stumbling block', (CTP, 2003b p.3), 'the name "technikon" is not competitive locally and is totally misunderstood' (CTP, 2003a p.2). The use of the word 'competitive' is intriguing as it might be interpreted to mean that

the UoTs will be better placed to compete with established universities, but it is also likely to refer to its desire to compete with the growing number of private providers in higher education. One particular argument cited the 2003 Strategy for Higher Education in England which claimed that ‘the title “university” would be awarded to institutions on the basis of degree awarding powers, student numbers, and the range of subjects offered’ (cited in CTP, 2003b p.4). The CTP stated that ‘[i]t is extremely difficult (if not impossible) to explain why technikons are degree-awarding institutions, but are **not** called universities’ (CTP, 2003b p.4). If this statement is unpacked it would seem to suggest that the status change should involve nothing more than a renaming of the technikons – after all, both types of institutions at the time of renaming offered degrees. Interestingly, while the issue of branding was used by the CTP as an argument to resist the merging of institutions, ‘[b]randing is a risky and costly business’ (CTP, 2003a p.2), the CTP did not refer to the cost and risk of branding the new UoTs as an obstacle to this renaming process.

Throughout the process of appealing for the name change, the focus was on the inappropriateness of ‘technikon’ as a title for career-focused institutions, and the elevation in status and perception that would transpire as a result of the name change. It seems, therefore, that aside from issues of perception and ‘raised status’, there were no other significant reasons given for the proposed change. This is borne out in the following CTP statement: ‘Where the ethos and focus of the five technikons remaining in the transformed educational landscape will be very similar, the CTP strongly urges that the name “**University of Technology**” be used for these institutions’ (CTP, 2003b p.4). The Ministry took a more pragmatic view than the CTP, stating that ‘[t]he reason for this [drive by a number of technikons to be called universities of technology], aside from the desire for prestige and status, is that the existing subsidy formula for higher education is weighted in favour of universities, in particular, in relation to research funding’ (DoE, 2001).

In defining what a UoT would be, the CTP declared that a UoT would ‘typically be an institution that has the capacity to create and apply knowledge and to conduct basic applied research within the context of innovation, entrepreneurship and the commercialisation of research results’ (CTP, 2003b p.4). Significantly this report

went on to state that '[a] healthy balance of the above attributes translates into a university of technology with *general and career-focused streams* that will develop competencies and supply learning opportunities to meet the relevant professional, socio-economic and human resource demands of South Africa' (CTP, 2003b p.5)<sup>13</sup>. The inclusion of a general stream seems to contradict the CTP's frequent assertion that there is a need for a diverse range of institutions that are differentiated in terms of their missions, and that 'our economy needs more work-focused degrees' (CTP, 2003b p.4). Further to this, it gives more credence to the argument that increasing 'academic drift' could give rise to a more uniform sector and further erode the distinctions between university and UoT missions, entrance requirements, qualifications and programmes and research focus areas. Is the assumption then that the only quality that currently differentiates a university from an ex-technikon is the technology focus of the ex-technikons?

At this point it must be acknowledged that a comparison between South African universities and UoTs is in danger of giving the impression that traditional universities are a single homogeneous entity, and that UoTs too have indistinguishable visions and purposes. Aside from the differences among all traditional universities and universities of technology in terms of their resources, target student populations, access requirements to programmes, niche areas, staff expertise, and the different experiences they can offer their students, there is also 'an imbalance between the historically black disadvantaged universities and technikons and the historically white advantaged institutions' (Ogude et al., 2001 p.3) that cannot be overlooked. While these differences should be recognised, it is true to say that if the South African higher education sector is to encompass the diversity so often mentioned (Badat, 2006; CTP, 2003b; DoE, 2001), there should be certain attributes that characterise both universities and UoTs and others that clearly demonstrate the distinctions between these two types of institutions. In his inaugural address as Vice-Chancellor of Rhodes University, Professor Saleem Badat talked about what it means to be a university. He described four key characteristics of a university as the production and dissemination of knowledge; cultivating and forming

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<sup>13</sup> The use of italics indicates my own emphasis.

the cognitive character of students; commitment 'to the spirit of truth' and allowing intellectual inquiry; and having academic freedom, self-rule by academics, and institutional autonomy (Badat, 2006 p.7). Few would argue with Badat who makes it clear that these qualities should be shared by all universities and universities of technology within a sector that fosters and values the diversity of its institutions. Lionel Slammert<sup>14</sup>, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic at the Durban University of Technology, describes any university as an institution of higher learning that has as its foundation the pursuit of knowledge at the highest level, and whose core business is teaching, learning, research and knowledge transfer, for the purposes of developing skills and competence to meet the interests and needs of students, staff, industry, the market and knowledge economy, society and academia (Slammert, 2007).

In my view, aside from the focus on technology and career-oriented education as distinguishing features of UoTs, there are other distinctions between universities and ex-technikons that will require the full engagement of management, staff and students at UoTs to redefine their institutions and reshape them into universities. It must be said, though, that the characteristics of a UoT are not that easily outlined. As is the case with established South African universities, UoTs can also not be viewed as institutions indistinguishable one from another. Each draws students from different regions, has a unique history, a different vision and mission, and its own ethos. Any attempt to define a UoT not only runs the risk of ignoring the differences between individual institutions, it is also in danger of suggesting that the UoTs exist as institutions operating parallel to, but completely separately from universities. The truth of course is that a UoT is a university, albeit 'a special kind of university' (Slammert, 2007), and thus many of its characteristics are also relevant for established universities and comprehensive universities. Slammert (2007) states that a UoT is a learning organisation dedicated to pursuing knowledge at the highest level, with technology as its central academic focus. The implications of this are that within UoTs, teaching and learning programmes should be geared for practice, research is applied and industry links are valued.

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<sup>14</sup> Prof Slammert was appointed as DVC:A of DUT in 2006 and passed away in 2008

Winberg's (2005) analysis of the changes and developments of technical higher education across more than four decades identifies three progressive chronotypes of technical higher education. The first chronotype which she describes is 'educating for the needs of industry' which was characterised by providing technical education designed to meet industry needs. Winberg's second chronotype which she calls 'imitating the universities' (2005 p.191) involved what I would refer to as 'structural' changes of the type that were discussed earlier in this chapter, and not necessarily tied to curriculum change or shifts in established practices within an institution. The third and most recent chronotype to have emerged is what Winberg refers to as 'rediscovering technology' which she characterises as a new era in which institutions have been forced to reconsider their educational and research missions (2005 p.195). The data analysis will consider the extent to which participant responses reflect curriculum approaches that portray this notion that relationships with the knowledge economy should be mutually beneficial for the transfer and application of knowledge, and its societal responsiveness should be geared towards the transfer of knowledge.

The chapter thus far has presented the broad historical context of this study, starting with an abbreviated account of our apartheid education system prior to 1994 in a way that sheds light on the context within which many current academics were taught and began their academic careers. Whatever one's political affiliations, the educational discourses of the apartheid era were powerful and shaped notions of teaching and learning. During this powerful apartheid regime, the prevailing regulatory discourse around knowledge was that it is neutral, value-free and not open to negotiation (Enslin, 1984), which is ironic given that the logic of apartheid rested on the assumption that knowledge is tied to culture and should therefore take different forms in different communities. This regulatory discourse manifested itself in curricula that were constructed in ways that did not promote debate or inquiry and were designed to perpetuate the state's racist ideology. This had implications for our curriculum change processes which would have to take into account the values and assumptions about learning that were constructed during this time. The data analysis of this study will thus explore the extent to which this view of knowledge construction still exists in the participants' discourses, and has influenced academic identities and



the way learning is viewed. Since the early 1990's, there have been numerous developments with 'far reaching implications for educational thought and practice, and especially for higher education' (Higgs, 1997 p.10). The last section focused on developments within post-apartheid higher education which shape national curriculum discourses, in particular the impact of current educational policy on the technikon sector which is still undergoing considerable change.

## **2.4 Discourses**

As indicated in the introduction, this study takes the perspective that the values, assumptions and practices of the past constrain and enable current conditions. It is therefore necessary to move beyond a telling of this historical context to an analysis of the discourses at play within the context.

### **2.4.1 *Global discourses***

One of the key challenges facing our society, including the transformation of education policy and practice, is how to respond to world changes encompassed by the term "globalisation" (Badat, 1998). Gibbons argues that globalisation is impacting on traditional methods of knowledge production in significant ways (1994). Some attempts at value-neutral definitions of globalisation such as that it 'just means increasing inter-dependence; societies are more inter-dependent with others across the world than any previous generation has been' (Moya, 2004 p.26), do not explain the complexities of the concept or indeed its impact and influence on curriculum transformation within a developing country.

It is often said that the world is becoming smaller, and the much-used term 'global village' seems to embody the idea that with the speed and efficiency of information technology, national borders are transcended and 'a globalized mass culture circulates the globe creating sameness and homogeneity everywhere' (Kellner, 2005 p.92). With the major transformation of production systems throughout the capitalist world economy (Kraak, 1997 p.52), globalisation gives rise to promises of increasing prosperity and development opportunities for all. However, for others, it presents the possibility of widening the gap between 'the haves' and the 'have-nots', and 'symbolizes the terrible triumph of unfettered capitalism and the resulting cultural

homogenization, the hegemony of the United States, [and] despoliation of the environment' (Green & Baer, 2000 p.1).

Carnoy describes globalisation succinctly as 'strategic, core activities, including innovation, finance and corporate management, [that] function on a planetary scale on real time' (1998 p.2). There has been an increase in global production through trans-national corporations, growth in international trading and co-operation, and a global mass culture dominated by Western values, all facilitated by more efficient modes of communication (Badat, 1998). These descriptions of globalisation, do not, however, take into account the contradictions and complexities of globalisation. Kellner suggests that although globalisation is presented as resistant to transformation, creating 'sameness and uniformity', globalised culture can also make possible 'unique appropriations and developments all over the world, thus proliferating hybrids, difference, and heterogeneity' (2005 p.92). He maintains that the institutions and instruments of globalisation can be used 'to further democratization and social justice'. However, 'many people these days operate with binary concepts of the global and the local, and promote one or the other side of the equation as the solution to the world's problems'. He argues that 'whether global or local solutions are most fitting depends on the conditions in the distinctive context that one is addressing' and the specific solutions and policies being proposed. (Kellner, 2005 p.99).

We need, though, to be critically aware of neo-liberal discourses which strongly purport that marketisation will lead to enhanced efficiency and responsiveness within the education sector, and that competition will provide opportunities for those who have been previously disadvantaged. Apple defines neo-liberalism as 'conservative modernization in education' and argues that:

the competitive market has not created much that is different from the traditional models so firmly entrenched in schools today. Nor has it radically altered the relations of inequality that characterize schooling (Apple, 2003 p.8).

Neo-liberalism, which has little to do with liberalism (Apple, 2003; Badat, 1998), is an ideology that promotes the supremacy of the markets, cuts in public expenditure,

free trade and flexible work organisations and processes. It is linked with globalisation which is largely driven by the governments of developed countries, as well as by international businesses and institutions that have a global focus (Badat, 1998). Neo-liberal discourse does not interrogate the norms and values of the dominant culture, and thus, as Giroux claims, these so-called liberal educational practices encourage elitism, selfishness, competition, individualism and personal reward for the able, and social exclusion for the disadvantaged (Giroux, 1988 p.186).

Kovacs and Boyles assert that there is a right-wing movement comprising 'idea brokers' (2005 p.1) within ultra-conservative institutes, foundations and think-tanks that have placed control over public schools into private or corporate hands. They thus contend that 'the voice dominating discourse over public education in America has a distinctly neoconservative tone' (2005 p.2). I argue that these influences have infiltrated education systems throughout the Western world and are evidenced in national qualification systems, 'the development of audit cultures, a general turn towards neo-liberal policies and away from social welfarism, and a general decline in collegial governance and moves towards managerialism' (Clegg, 2009 p.2).

In an article reporting on an analysis of international shifts in higher education since the 1980s, Bundy noted that 'essentially similar shifts – massification, marketisation and managerialism, overseen by the regulatory state – emerged with striking synchronicity in advanced capitalist societies' (2006 p.1). Henkel claims that 'the academy has become a site of struggle between academics and other interest groups for control of matters previously taken for granted as academic prerogative' and that while the institution 'has more power to influence academic working lives' it may be a 'weaker source of identification' (Henkel, 2005 pp.163-4).

In South Africa, insulation from global trends until the early 1990s<sup>15</sup> meant that exposure to the rapid spread of globalisation and the consequent shift in modes of knowledge was delayed. Bundy states that as a consequence of this delay, South Africa tackled a great number of issues very quickly, and that like a film projected at

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<sup>15</sup> During the apartheid system, the country was faced with international academic and other boycotts and was thus not widely exposed to developments taking place in other parts of the world.

fast speed, the sequence of change is 'recognisable, but jerky exaggerated and frenetic' (2006 p.9). Fast-developing information and communication technologies and the resultant growth of connectivity have brought with them an increase in the number of sites of knowledge *outside* of universities where research is being undertaken and knowledge is produced. Technology advancement has also led to a greater capacity for the development of a 'socially distributed knowledge production system' with increased communication amongst different sites of knowledge production (Gibbons, 2000 p.41). The influence of marketisation on higher education in this country is reflected in the move towards more entrepreneurial activity within universities, many of which include entrepreneurship as part of the curricula. There is also an increased drive to generate more 'third stream income' through partnerships with industry, commercialisation of intellectual 'products', endowments and research grants from a variety of sources. Universities also have growing public relations departments and embark upon fundraising campaigns. They use more sophisticated branding and marketing tactics in attempts to compete for better quality students, increased funding and donations from diverse funders. In short, universities are behaving more like commercial enterprises than ever before. While Singh agrees that there have been 'trade-offs' and a growing 'pragmatism in the face of pressing moral and political challenges and an increase in efficiency discourses', she reminds us that 'efficiency can also be part of the armoury of strategies invoked to enhance equity and redress gains' (2006 p.67).

#### **2.4.2 Policy discourses**

There has been much debate within South Africa about the competing demands evident in national policy (Moya, 2004: Badat, 1998: Kraak, 2004) where we see the pull towards internationalisation wrestling for ascendancy against the need for local economic and social transformation. These competing demands are acknowledged in the previously mentioned *Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education* (DoE, 1997a) which states that the challenge for the South African economy is to integrate 'itself into the competitive arena of international production and finance' with its new communication and information technologies 'which place a premium on knowledge and skills, leading to the notion of the "knowledge society," have transformed the way in which people work and

consume'. The policy also recognises the challenge of redress and transformation in the reconstruction of 'domestic social and economic relations to eradicate and redress the inequitable patterns of ownership, wealth and social and economic practices that were shaped by segregation and apartheid' (DoE, 1997a p.9).

Despite this acknowledgement, there is some evidence to suggest that within South African education policy, neo-liberal discourses are more prevalent than those focusing on local redress and transformation. Kraak asserts that South African higher education policy formulation in the period 1990 to 2002 was impacted by 'several competing discourses - some local, some global' (2004 p.244). The government's Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) macro-economic policy strategy was released two years after the more socially democratic *Reconstruction and Development Programme* (RDP) (African National Congress, 1994) that 'sought to link economic policy to other policy domains' (Kraak, 2004 p.255) including education and training. This policy framework 'was strongly shaped by international neoliberal thinking' which Kraak suggests, has 'drastically reduced the new state's abilities to coherently steer and plan the fundamental reconstruction and transformation of HE' (2004 p.245). Much of the higher education policy has been accused of adopting a 'neoliberal economic rationalism' and neglecting democratic discourses that had been so prominent during the earlier period of discussions around policy development (Kraak, 2004 p.264). Some analysts have referred to this shift from 'a progressive equity agenda to a more conservative agenda' (Boughey, 2007 p.5) as slippage in the state's policy positions in relation to higher education (Boughey, 2007; Kraak, 2004; Fataar, 2003). It is worth remembering though that South Africa is a country that had to grapple with its historical legacy of exclusion, inequality and a lack of 'common citizenship' as well as its need to grow economically. Singh suggests that our policy documents, through their 'competing priorities and nuances', mirror the complex realities that we inhabit (2006 p.68). Following this shift, the call came from many historically disadvantaged higher education institutions to review policy and include more substantive programmes of racial redress for these institutions as they 'succumbed to crisis, driven mainly by growing institutional debt, mismanagement, poor leadership, and ongoing staff and student protest' (Kraak, 2004 p.264). What followed was 'a period

characterised by a lack of policy adhesion' with no 'binding consensus forged across all higher education constituencies in support of the official policy enacted by the new government' (Kraak, 2004 p.265). It seems therefore that the need to ensure South Africa's global competitiveness and economic stability has led to the development of more recent policies encouraging the pursuit of efficiency within higher education at the expense of a focus on the transformation of higher education curricula to promote increased equity and social reform.

Current influences on South Africa's education system (including marketisation, and shifting modes of knowledge production), have resulted in huge changes in the size and shape of institutions, in institutional governance structures, and in student and institutional management demographics. In supporting the view that globalisation is driving change within universities, I am interested in exploring what this means, not only for shifts in modes of knowledge production, but also for changes in knowledge consumption, circulation and conservation (Bundy, 2006 p.7). It seems clear that universities have traditionally operated with a particular set of research and curriculum practices which are currently being challenged to adapt and shift to include practices that accommodate and support the emergence of new modes of knowledge production that stretch beyond university boundaries.

Kraak (1999) claims that in most cases worldwide where education and training systemic discourses have emerged, they have done so within privileged single integrated regulatory frameworks. He maintains that this view emerged in the education and training policy formulation process in South Africa and as a policy discourse, focuses on the 'structural characteristics of the "system"' (1999 p.25). His opinion is that concerns about the implications of a rapidly globalising economy on the education and training system are central to any systemic education and training focus (1999 p.24). The emergence of South Africa into the global market after many years of isolation, and the focus on structural change as a means of shifting education and training values, assumptions and practices is explored in this study. Deacon and Parker draw attention to the many voices, arguing that there are several distinct competing and in some cases contradictory 'subdiscourses that have arisen within the broader NQF discourse and that these have distinct structural bases'

(1996 p.164). They state that there are contradictions between these discourses, premised on their different epistemological assumptions or ways of knowing the world and describe two broad positions that 'emerged in NQF discourse during the mid-1990s' (Deacon & Parker, 1999 p.60). 'Weak integrationists' sought an integrated 'system' for education, which has traditionally been located in formal education institutions, (e.g. schools, technikons and universities) and training which is usually located in the workplace. Academic education and vocational training would differ, but the NQF would enable bridges to be built between the two through flexible progression paths and the portability of qualifications. 'Strong integrationists' sought to merge education and training (Deacon & Parker, 1999 p.60). This issue is one that is significant for this study because, as providers of technical education, universities of technology have sometimes been accused of favouring training discourses over those that are more academic (McKenna and Sutherland, 2006).

Popkewitz (1984) describes the function of critical theory as that which seeks to understand the relations among value, interest and action and to change the world, not to describe it. Evidence of this orientation can be found in the mission statement for the Curriculum Framework as expressed in the draft document. There is a great deal of transformative rhetoric with references to 'the establishment of a just and equitable education and training system', 'the creation of a transformative, democratic open learning system', and 'lifelong education, training and development to empower people to participate effectively' (DoE, 1996b p.5). A critical orientation is also evident within the Higher Education Act of 1997 which makes explicit the need to restructure and transform programmes and institutions so that past discrimination is redressed and democracy is encouraged. This discourse is echoed in the principles and tenets for South Africa's outcomes-based approach in which nation-building, democracy, mutual respect, civic responsibility and non-discrimination are emphasised.

Although strands of this critical paradigm are to be found within South African education policy documents, neither the Curriculum Framework for General and Further Education and Training (1996b) nor the White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education (DoE, 1997) can be located comfortably within

this paradigm. Schubert claims that 'critical praxis seeks liberation from ideological constraints' (1986, p.177). While these documents represent a dramatic shift away from the oppressive values and ideological constraints in pre-1994 education policy, they are to some extent pragmatic frameworks operating under the guise of transformative rhetoric, designed to simultaneously serve big business interests with a focus on producing learners who are better equipped to fulfil certain functions that help to drive the economy. While the transformative and pragmatic policy discourses might not be entirely contradictory, there are tensions that are heightened by the lack of clarity regarding which interest is the primary focus.

A focus on the economic function of education policy over that of the transformative agenda can perhaps be attributed to the extensive consultation process with a wide range of stakeholders including representatives from industry and commerce that preceded the publishing of the Education White Paper 3. Here there is not only the transformative rhetoric but also a focus on the need for learners to contribute towards the economic development of the country. This economic focus is also evident in the Curriculum Framework for General and Further Education and Training, in which the first principle informing curriculum design is Human Resource Development (DoE, 1996b). There is a focus on the need for learners to contribute towards the economic development of the country. The two strands of transformation and pragmatism are also evident in the linking of Education and Training within the Curriculum Framework, with the implication that education and training policy and strategy should be linked to economic policy and strategy.

Kraak (2001) reminds us that the transformative discourse evolved out of the 1980s People's Education discourse while a 'high skills' discourse developed as a response to globalisation and the need for South Africa to participate in the growing global economy. Boughey states that 'in South Africa the [high skills] discourse gained prominence because of its perceived potential to link education, the labour market and macro-economic restructuring' (2007, p.11). The redesigned funding formula for higher education states that '[t]he Ministry will adopt goal-oriented incentives as an integral part of the public funding framework. That is, explicit incentives will be used to steer the development of the higher education system in accordance with national



goals' (DoE, 1997b p.33). These funding shifts influence the strategic plans of higher education providers and have implications for the programmes offered in higher education institutions, supporting the view that education is becoming more focussed on the development of consumable skills. This is particularly significant for my study which looks at discourses, including the high skills discourse operating in the UoT environment and the curriculum discourses of the participants.

Within both the South African schooling and higher education sectors it is clear that different interests have influenced the development and implementation of education policy. Although policy is informed by transformative rhetoric, and articulates principles, beliefs and values that link it to the critical paradigm, the process undertaken in formulating policy is contradictory to the rhetoric within the policy documents (Kraak, 2001). Contradictions between rhetoric and process are evident in higher, further and general education and training policy. The establishment of a generic curriculum framework with generalised principles and guidelines is by its very nature *theoretic*<sup>16</sup> and at odds with a critical approach. Tisani states that:

shifts in the understanding of knowledge and its creation have resulted in a questioning of the conventional approaches to curriculum design. Frameworks are perceived as contrary to the nature of curriculum which is dynamic and is pregnant with multiple meanings and a myriad of [sic] interpretations (Tisani, 1998 p.5).

Schwab (1983) would argue that rather than constructing a theoretic paradigm such as this, curriculum researchers should ask questions about problems that are experienced within particular settings, and should interact with and involve educators who work in those particular settings. In this way, Schwab maintains, the unique interests and needs of people and situations can be met (Schubert, 1986). Advocates of current education policy might argue that this *practical* approach would in fact be impractical in South Africa considering the urgent need for quick educational reform to redress the imbalances of the apartheid system with its multiple education departments which provided unequal access and provision of education and educator training.

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<sup>16</sup> Theoretic is a term used by Joseph Schwab to describe a technical, behaviouristic research paradigm for curriculum inquiry.

Just as the higher education sector has been impacted upon by the contradictory or co-existing interests evident within higher education curriculum policy and practice, it also faces challenges regarding the implementation of outcomes-based approaches. Jansen explains that outcomes-based education in SA was proposed 'without warning, in late 1996' (1999a, p.7). Those stakeholders involved in influencing the formulation of post-apartheid education and training policy, have also been instrumental in ensuring that this approach, ideally suited for the design of industry-related training programmes, was adopted for education and training across all sectors. The rationale behind the adoption of an outcomes-based approach, as articulated by the DoE (1996b; 1998) states that curricula should be relevant and appropriate to current and anticipated needs of commerce and industry, and that economic growth depends on a well-educated population equipped with the necessary competences and skills required in the economy at any point in time. As Taylor states, '...any new government will face popular demands for the equalisation of education provision. In tension with this push for equity as a basic human right is the need for a clear human resources programme to service economic development' (1993 p.25). In efforts to move away from rote learning and the lack of critical thinking equated with apartheid education, the introduction of outcomes-based education was seen to be closely linked to the democratisation of South African society (Allais, 2003).

There is fierce contestation of the epistemological, political and implementation difficulties of OBE (Mason, 1999) and strong critique that its implementation in South Africa has in fact been within a technical paradigm (Jansen, 1999a; Allais, 2003). Kraak too takes this position, stating that 'it would appear as if the original social and economic goals have faded into the background in the development of the OBE model, and its planners now appear wedded to a technicist conception of OBE in spite of widespread criticism of its behaviourist origins and bureaucratic implications' (1997 pp.71-2). With regard to the organisation of knowledge and the curriculum, there are concerns that the NQF is based on incorrect assumptions about the transferability of knowledge and learning, and that OBE is aiming 'to reduce knowledge into discrete segments' and collapsing 'the knowledge boundaries between academic, vocational, formal and tacit knowledge constructs' (Kraak, 1997

p.71). Universities have criticised the bureaucratic technicist OBE approach adopted in South Africa, and the initial vociferous debate about the wisdom of adopting OBE remains an issue in South African education that elicits strong views.

There was an expectation among policy-makers that outcomes-based education would replace existing teaching and learning discourses evident within these institutions and result in transformed curriculum, teaching and learning practices. There was little recognition of the assumptions about teaching and learning underpinning technikon practices and a complete lack of understanding about what such shifts would mean for challenges to academic identity of which assumptions about teaching and learning form such an important part. In addition to the above-mentioned challenges, there are a number of serious contradictions within education policy that have cast a shadow over the approach towards outcomes-based education that has been adopted in this country. While these issues were discussed previously, it is worth mentioning again that the transformative discourse in policy documents has, to some extent, been superseded by the more dominant discourse of economic responsiveness (Kraak, 2004). This has led to a market-oriented version of OBE that is linked with elements of neo-liberal economic policy, and has given rise to a focus on skills-based approaches to education (Allais, 2007). In their international critique of OBE, Smyth and Dow caution that '[o]utcomes rhetoric, as part of a new thesis of economic rationalism and scientific management seems to have become the discourse of a normal and natural approach to the provision of education, an approach which has largely reduced, marginalised, and rendered other discourses irrelevant' (1998 p.291).

### **2.4.3 Curriculum discourse**

It is within the context of the dismantling of apartheid that outcomes-based education took root. One could argue that an outcomes-based approach might have a useful place in the design of *training* programmes, with the pursuit of specific outcomes. However, the wisdom of emphasising the attainment of behavioural goals in the field of higher education which focuses on knowledge acquisition and construction is questionable. The behaviourist psychology upon which OBE is based reflects an instrumental view in which outcomes-based curriculum design assumes a linear

relationship between pre-specified outcomes and learning. There are also signs in current curriculum that learning is being dissected into small chunks that do not take account of disciplinary knowledge structures (Luckett & Webbstock, 1999). With its lack of focus on context, there are also concerns that in addition to undermining the academics' role within the teaching and learning context, OBE serves to undermine the contextual realities of learners. While it might be true that this approach encourages the use of a wider range of teaching and assessment methods and more active learning, there is an assumption that academics and learners are already equipped with the skills to apply alternative modes and styles of teaching and learning. In view of our educational history as outlined above, I would argue that this is not so and that both academics and learners would benefit from support and further debate about the outcomes-based approach to teaching and learning.

This analysis highlights the tensions between national discourses and the assumptions and practices valued by academics. One particular area of tension noted in the literature is around the notion of academic autonomy. Academics within traditional universities<sup>17</sup> have valued their academic autonomy. Change initiatives have been internally driven and their values and assumptions reflect a belief in the intrinsic value of higher education in which 'individuals are viewed as self-actualising and self-liberating through the power of human reason' (Luckett & Webbstock, 1999 pp.4-5). Thus the idea of a 'functional' extrinsically-driven higher education system comprising intra- and inter-disciplinary learning programmes has raised major concerns within this sector. While UoTs have traditionally (as technikons) consulted widely with employers about the content and structure of their programmes, those working within traditional universities have largely understood knowledge as 'decontextualised, propositional and hierarchically pre-classified and structured by the academic disciplines' (Luckett & Webbstock, 1999 p.5). Further to this, within universities the idea of having to explicitly articulate pedagogy, including intended learning outcomes and assessment criteria for each course, was unfamiliar and was largely viewed with misgiving and scepticism. Individual lecturers teaching in traditional universities had largely been responsible for determining their own

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<sup>17</sup> I have used the term 'traditional universities' to distinguish between those institutions that have always been classified as universities from the universities of technology that were technikons until they were recently reclassified as UoTs.

discipline-based course structure and content and their accountability for classroom practices was chiefly to their students. Any monitoring or evaluation of university lecturers and courses was primarily carried out through student and peer review, rather than through more uniform and structured processes guided by a national quality council. Quality practices within technikons were more regulated and bureaucratic, with the Certification Council for Technikon Education (SERTEC), a pre-1994 quality council that, until its abolition, functioned specifically to accredit and evaluate technikon offerings.

Curriculum policy, underpinned by the principles of the NQF, features three distinct and competing education and training policy discourses (Kraak, 1999). The first of these emerged out of People's Education, and was followed by a less radical and more consensual systemic discourse and an outcomes-based discourse (discussed later in this chapter), which have been influential in the post-1994 shaping of a single national education and training system. The consensual systemic discourse emerged as a way of addressing national challenges that included participation in the global economy<sup>18</sup> as well as local development needs and the reconstruction of society. Reddy too identifies a systemic discourse that emphasised procedural changes towards a more efficiently regulated, co-ordinated higher education system that would be 'more responsive to the real challenges posed by globalisation by creating a skilled workforce for the so-called "knowledge society"' (2004 p.8). This is also referred to as a realist-instrumentalist paradigm associated with 'new education lexicon, part state-speak, part populist and part specialist' (Reddy, 2004 p.8).

## **2.5 Conclusion**

The systemic changes that have taken place since 1994 have resulted in a suite of education policies and regulations that are both complex and somewhat confusing for those whose job it is to interpret and implement them. While few people would advocate a return to the pre-1994 status quo, the complexity has been exacerbated by the multiplicity of structures and mechanisms established to facilitate the successful implementation of the systemic changes. A cursory look at the list of

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<sup>18</sup> Globalisation and its impact on education, including knowledge production, is discussed in Chapter Three

acronyms at the start of this thesis bears testimony to this. Aside from the widespread structural changes within the higher education sector, including institutional mergers and the reclassification of technikons as UoTs, there were also significant epistemological shifts regulated through education policy. These included the introduction of outcomes-based education and the establishment of a NQF which had both structural and pedagogical implications.

The extent to which this vastly changed landscape with shifting shape, assumptions and values has impacted on academics in this case study is discussed in the findings of this thesis. This is done by exploring how these histories and their linked discourses play themselves out at the institutional level through the voices of the individual academics. My purpose in providing this overview has not only been to situate the study within its broad macro-level context but also, given the critical stance of this thesis, to point to some of the prevailing educational discourses within our past and recent history. This is intended to provide a platform for understanding some of the possible influences upon knowledge construction and the curriculum discourses of academics.

## **Chapter Three: Literature review and theoretical framework**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This study draws upon a substantial body of literature on issues of knowledge, curriculum and academic identity, not only discussing how these concepts are theorised in the literature but also making explicit the relationship among these concepts as they are understood for the purposes of this study. The chapter begins with a review of the literature around knowledge, pointing to the ongoing debate about the emerging Mode 2 paradigm of knowledge production (Gibbons, 1997), and exploring the relationship between knowledge and curriculum. It suggests that several factors are challenging established university knowledge production practices and encouraging academics to explore new and varied ways of constructing knowledge. The discussion then moves onto a more detailed study of curriculum and the relevance of these insights for curriculum transformation.

In line with the socio-cultural approach adopted in this study and an interest in the role that issues of identity play in the capacity and willingness of academics to transform curriculum, Chapter Three also includes a review of international studies relating to academic identity and the socio-cultural factors that play a role in the construction and maintenance of academic identities. It explores the interplay and flow of power relations (Trowler, 2008) among the different contextual factors at the macro- and meso-levels in order to provide more insight into the complex and often contradictory discourses to which academics are exposed and which understandably influence their change responses. Particular attention is paid to the importance of understanding the assumptions, values and practices underpinning institutional and workgroup cultures and their influence upon the change positions of individuals.

### **3.2 Knowledge**

Knowledge production and dissemination, while closely related, are distinct. Before exploring the relationship between knowledge and curriculum, and investigating the ways that changing modes of knowledge production and organisation are impacting upon curriculum practice in higher education, this section considers the literature around knowledge production.

Gibbons et al. (1994) present a view of the changes taking place in knowledge production, by theorising that there are two distinct modes: Mode 1 representing what are generally known as traditional research approaches and Mode 2 modelling practices that are fashioned to take advantage of and contribute towards the production of knowledge within a wider context and for different purposes.

Gibbons states that within universities '[t]he production of knowledge is guided by a set of research practices which determine, among other things, what shall count as new knowledge. It has a disciplinary structure and this governs the organization and management of universities today' (1997 p.1). This form of knowledge production is referred to as Mode 1: a set of rules, methods, values and norms that ensures compliance with what is considered to be sound scientific practice. Mode 1 knowledge production has many characteristics in common with the traditional paradigm of scientific enquiry. What this means is that it tends to be initiated and driven by a homogenous group of specialists in a particular discipline within an academic institution. Research projects would usually continue over an extended period of time, be managed in stable, hierarchical academic or research institutions and quality assured through peer review. Implicit within this view that knowledge production most suitably occurs within the confines of 'closed' institutions, is the suggestion that knowledge production is context-free.

Gibbons claims that within disciplinary science, 'peer review operates to channel individuals to work on problems judged to be central to the advance of the discipline. These problems are defined largely in terms of criteria which reflect the intellectual interests and preoccupations of the discipline and its gatekeepers' (1997 p.7). Within this mode, researchers would generally be accountable to the research funder/s, usually government, and feedback would be given to stakeholders, often in the form of formal reports, conference presentations or papers published in journals.

This paradigm operates within a set of cognitive and social norms that define 'what counts as a contribution to knowledge, who is allowed to participate in its production and how accreditation is organised' (Gibbons, 2000 p.38). These norms privilege the disciplinary structure of theoretical or experimental science and the 'autonomy of



scientists and their host institutions, the universities' (Nowotny et al., 2003 p.179) and 'must be followed in the production, legitimation and diffusion of discipline-based knowledge' (Gibbons, 2000 p.39). There is a notion that 'good' scientific research practice occurs only when specific rules regarding 'who is allowed to practice science, and what constitutes good science' are followed (Gibbons, 2000 pp.39-40). Consequently, Mode 1 knowledge production has largely been 'owned' and governed by the interests of a specific academic research community, usually situated within a university or research centre. Within this paradigm '[t]he pursuit of the accumulation of knowledge is inseparably the quest for recognition and the desire to make a name for oneself' (Bourdieu, 1997 p.110). Gibbons contends that 'there is sufficient empirical evidence to indicate that a distinct set of cognitive and social practices is beginning to emerge and they are different to those that govern Mode 1' (1997 p.3). Rip maintains that the emergence of Mode 2 knowledge production has come about partly as a result of decreasing political and public confidence in the importance and relevance of science, and partly as a result of a more critical attitude to science which has led the elite of established science to reluctantly accommodate ongoing changes (2000 p.47-8).

### ***3.2.1 Changing modes of knowledge production***

The argument being made by Gibbons is that Mode 1 knowledge production is being superseded by a new paradigm of knowledge production, Mode 2, which is trans-disciplinary. Kraak describes this trans-disciplinarity as one of the defining features of Mode 2 (1997 p.59). Bundy agrees that there is a shift away from the 'enlightenment model of knowledge as coherent, autonomous and self-referential' and a move towards a fragmentation of academic disciplines which are seen as 'diffuse, fluid and opaque' (2006 p.8). Having emerged from a particular context of application, 'transdisciplinary knowledge develops its own distinct theoretical structures, research methods, and modes of practice, though they may not be located on the prevalent disciplinary map' (Gibbons, 1997 p.5). In this shift towards Mode 2, there is a risk of simply accepting that relationships between features associated with Mode 1 and those linked to Mode 2 are dichotomous. An example might be the issue of disciplinarity of Mode 1 that seems to be placed in an oppositional relationship with the seemingly less insular inter-disciplinarity that is a

core feature of Mode 2. There is a suggestion that disciplinarity is restrictive, rigid and educationally unsuited to the current situation. On the other hand, the discourse of inter-disciplinarity infers that its flexibility and openness are more educationally sound and suitable for meeting current needs. Before accepting 'an oversimplified dichotomy that obscures the more subtle interactions that do take place' (Klein, 1990 p.105), it is necessary to look more closely at both these terms. Klein suggests that often disciplines are confused with departments, and she maintains that 'discipline also signifies something else, a stable epistemic community and agreement upon what constitutes excellence in a field. When tied to this meaning, disciplinarity has an undeniably positive value' (1990 p.107). Inter-disciplinarity occurs when elements of two or more disciplines are woven together in an integrated curriculum to enhance learning. For an inter-disciplinary approach to work successfully there is a need for institutional support so that both academic and administrative systems can accommodate inter-disciplinary courses, and there is close collaboration between academics from different epistemic communities who are accustomed to working within their disciplinary fields. The data analysis explores ways that these academics value their own disciplinary communities and explores their discourses for indications that the proposed shifts are being made.

Mode 2 knowledge production draws from a heterogeneous range of people's skills and experience, is application-oriented and takes place in diverse sites that are linked through functioning networks of communication. Rather than being initiated by specialists towards the advancement of their particular discipline, Mode 2 knowledge production is frequently driven by supply and demand factors within the marketplace, and tends to be the outcome of processes from sources of supply that are increasingly diverse. This is not to suggest that Mode 2 knowledge production is driven purely by commercial considerations, but 'it is shaped by a more diverse set of intellectual and social demands' which means that the outcomes are socially distributed (Gibbons, 1997 p.4). Whereas previously, the academic department housing the discipline had been the 'focus of academic activity and identification', the current shifts mean that the department is only one knowledge site (Henkel, 2005 p.164). This has implications for academic identity as 'interaction between discipline, institution and individual has become far more complex and the image of the

institution as a bounded and protective space of distinctive activity is no longer tenable' (Henkel, 2005 p.164).

Gibbons states that '[t]o qualify as a specific form of knowledge production it is essential that inquiry be guided by specifiable consensus as to appropriate cognitive and social practice' (1997 p.4). In terms of Mode 2, this means that the consensus is determined by the context of the knowledge application and evolves with it. Whereas in Mode 1 the consensus is stable and continuous, in Mode 2 the consensus 'may be only temporary depending on how well it conforms to the requirements set by the specific context of application' and 'the shape of the final solution will normally be beyond that of any single contributing discipline' (Gibbons, 1997 p.4). Mode 2 knowledge production is generally problem-based, with both the knowledge producers being more mobile and the results more transient and dynamic than Mode 1, 'moving increasingly away from traditional disciplinary activity into new societal contexts' (Gibbons, 1997 p.5). Like Mode 1, though, it too comprises both empirical and theoretical components, and should be both systematic and methodologically sound, meaning that 'it is undeniably a contribution to knowledge, though not necessarily disciplinary knowledge' (van der Mescht, 2002 p.8). Other key features of Mode 2 are flexibility and faster response time provided by a variety of knowledge production organisations that have emerged 'to accommodate the changing and transitory nature of the problems Mode 2 addresses' (Gibbons, 1997 pp.5-6).

Reflexivity is another important element of Mode 2 knowledge production as research towards the resolution of the types of problems being posed often has to 'incorporate options for the implementation of the solutions' (Gibbons, 1997 p.6) which depend as much on the values and preferences of various groups and individuals as upon the science and technology used within the research process. Those producing knowledge are frequently asked a wider range of questions, including those that are social, political or economic, than would necessarily have been asked of Mode 1 knowledge producers. Thus it follows that quality is evaluated using a broader set of criteria reflecting the wider range of expertise involved in the project. Gibbons refers to this as 'a more composite, multidimensional kind' of quality control (1997 p.7).

Much has been written about the Mode 1 and Mode 2 debate since it was published in 1994, including articles expanding upon Gibbons' (2000) theory and exploring its implications within different contexts (Kraak, 2000; Muller, 2000; Rip, 2000; Subotzky, 1999). While analysts seem to agree that there are shifts taking place in knowledge production, not all of them support the Mode 1 and Mode 2 interpretation of these changes. Rip comments that terms such as 'Mode 2 knowledge production' are buzz-words and rhetorical ploys designed to 'posit a dichotomous history, which emphasizes that we are entering a new phase, or era, which is very different from what we had before' (2000 p.45). He suggests that to create this divide between Mode 1 and Mode 2 is erroneous and he cautions that '[t]he game of fashionable labelling is not an innocent one' (Rip, 2000 p.45). His position is that changes in science happen all the time. Sometimes there are what he calls 'lock-ins', periods when a particular view of science becomes embedded in society and linked to particular types of institutions. He suggests that Mode 1 was just one such lock-in but by no means existed to the exclusion of more heterogeneous modes of knowledge production. The danger of pushing towards a Mode 2 lock-in by making it seem fashionable is that a false perception is created that this heterogeneity of knowledge production is the exclusive terrain of Mode 2 (2000 pp.45-6).

While Gibbons focuses on changes taking place in modes of knowledge production, 'critical pedagogy follows a distinction regarding forms of knowledge' (McLaren, 2003 p.73) posited by the German philosopher and sociologist Jürgen Habermas. His social theory is concerned with the existence of three kinds of knowledge constitutive interests. Although Habermas's theoretical explorations into forms of knowledge were 'not written within a context of educational theory, [they do] have implications for educational theory and for understanding educational practices' (Grundy, 1987 p.8). He maintains that the abiding human interest is in preserving life and that this interest has its foundation in 'life organized through knowledge' (Habermas, 1972 p.211). Habermas proposed three kinds of knowledge constitutive interests, technical, practical and emancipatory, which represent the types of science by which knowledge is produced and organised and which together create a unified whole (Habermas, 1974). These three knowledge interests establish whether knowledge claims can be justified (MacIsaac, 1996). Grundy (1987) refers to these three ways

of knowing, based on different understandings of knowledge, as empirical-analytic, historical-hermeneutic and critical. They shape 'what counts as the objects and types of knowledge' (Grundy, 1987 p.10), and 'inform social organisation through "work, language, and power"' (Habermas, 1972 p.313). Each knowledge interest spawns different ways of knowing. Knowledge of the technical supports the mastery of skill; communicative knowledge is the knowledge of the practical, developed through the hermeneutic interpretations that make possible the orientation of action; and emancipatory knowledge supports a critical way of knowing where analysis and reflection enable empowerment and autonomy (McLeod, 2001).

The next interest as described by Habermas and Grundy is oriented towards an understanding of the nature of social interaction, and the human need to be part of the world in which they live (Grundy, 1987). This practical or hermeneutic interest moves away from attempts at generating objective knowledge through experimentation, and instead there is a practical interest in interpreting and understanding the meanings of texts and situations in order to take the right (or moral) action. Within this paradigm the purpose of education is seen to be in its intrinsic value to those involved, rather than to the preparation of learners for a particular vocation or career.

The third interest described by Habermas is emancipatory and moves beyond interpretation to include critical reflection 'on the social and historical shaping of our ideas, actions and institutions (ideology critique)' (Luckett, 1995 p.133). 'Emancipatory knowledge helps us understand how social relationships are distorted and manipulated by relations of power and privilege' (McLaren, 2003 p.73). Insights gained through critical self-awareness lead to a transformed consciousness and create the foundation for transformed social and economic values.

While issues of knowledge production and construction are central to curriculum studies, knowledge and curriculum are often incorrectly elided into one concept. In the next section I briefly discuss some understandings of curriculum before exploring the relationship between knowledge and curriculum in more detail.

### **3.3. Curriculum**

Asking the question 'What is curriculum?' in some ways assumes that there can be one over-arching definition that sets curriculum apart from its social context. However, as with all other aspects of educational practice, there are many definitions of curriculum. Barnett and Coate suggest that 'whatever conceptualizations of curricula we can tacitly identify will not necessarily form a coherent picture. Sometimes, these notions of the curriculum overlap and at other times some conceptions of curricula are more dominant than others' (Barnett & Coate, 2005 p.27). There are narrow definitions that describe it as the syllabus of a course, and broad definitions that describe curriculum as all activities, both planned and unplanned, including hidden assumptions and intentions, that affect student learning. Broad definitions of curriculum are thus critical in nature and attribute to it a social and political role, suggesting that curriculum can serve to reproduce or resist the dominant ideology of a society (Bernstein, 2000). Bernstein states that 'how a society selects, classifies, distributes, transmits and evaluates the educational knowledge that it considers to be public reflects both the distribution of power and the principles of social control' (1971 p.47). Ross suggests that curriculum designed to reproduce the culture of a society by serving to maintain the status quo is not a simple matter. This is largely due to the increasing 'range of multiple cultural identities' that individuals construct within an increasingly multi-cultural society, including the plurality of ethnic, linguistic and social backgrounds. This makes 'selecting a set of cultural attributes for conscious transmission, through the curriculum' (Ross, 2000 p.10) a complex matter, as evidenced in the complexities within our own higher education system.

During apartheid each institution was designed to serve students from a particular language and/or racial group to the exclusion of others. One could argue that at the time, the development of curricula designed to reproduce the dominant culture must have been relatively straightforward within these largely mono-cultural institutions with a clearly articulated political agenda. Even then, however, there must have been complexities, particularly within institutions that served communities discriminated against by the apartheid ideology. My experience of working within this system has led me to ask questions about the existence of contradictory discourses, those

resisting the dominant political milieu competing with those reproducing the dominant apartheid ideology of the time, operating within these institutions and reflected in curricula.

Within the different understandings of curriculum, *knowledge* construction is commonly acknowledged as a key purpose of curriculum, and the knowledge environment within which institutions are operating are thus significant for curriculum practice. Before looking specifically at issues within institutions that impact upon the capacity of academic staff to transform curricula in ways that take into account shifting knowledge uses, the nature of their own pedagogic practice, the way that power and control are exercised through their pedagogic communication, and the nature and needs of students, it is my intention to look more closely at the relationship between knowledge and curriculum.

### **3.3.1. *The relationship between curriculum and knowledge***

To be more explicit about the relationship between knowledge and curriculum, I am drawing from Bernstein's investigation into the pedagogising of knowledge, that is, selecting knowledge from fields of knowledge production and then rearranging and recontextualising it to become educational knowledge (Moore & Maton, 2001). While Gibbons (2000) focuses on the impact of both external and internal influences, including the development of the global economy, electronic communication, and neo-liberalism, on the shifting modes of knowledge production, and explicates the concomitant shifts needed within education systems to accommodate these influential trends, Bernstein (1995) speaks more specifically to the pedagogising of knowledge. In focusing on devices of transmission, Bernstein uses the concept of a pedagogic device which has distributive, recontextualising and evaluative rules. While the distributive rule entails the regulation and distribution of a society's knowledge store, recontextualising involves taking meaning from one particular context and transforming it into a pedagogical discourse, thus changing its meaning and communicative purpose. Further transformation of the pedagogic discourse into a set of standards to be attained is ordered by evaluative rules. Bernstein's pedagogic device enables us to understand how knowledge is transformed into educational knowledge and communicated through curriculum. His work on

knowledge structures, discussed in the following section, also enables us to explore the ways that curriculum enables and constrains existing social power relations.

Bernstein is clear in his view that knowledge is not neutral, but is subject to ideological elements that arise from the various interests of those who structure the recontextualising field (Bernstein, 2000 p.35). Bernstein's theory of curriculum and his introduction of a pedagogic device are useful in providing an understanding of the complexities within pedagogical relations and communication, the discourses of knowledges which are deeply entrenched within institutions and issues of power and control. Moore refers to Bernstein's view that 'different knowledges (and thus different forms of consciousness) are distributed to different social groups in ways that generally tend to reproduce broad social order' (Moore, 2003b p.56).

While Bernstein viewed schooling and curriculum as instruments that facilitate class reproduction and legitimise the inequitable distribution of privilege and achievement for the educated classes, he was inclined to focus on the ways that 'pedagogic processes shape consciousness differentially', rather than to foreground issues of social class (Bernstein, 2000 p.4). He was concerned with how a dominating distribution of power and control translates into communication principles that differentially regulate relations between and within social groups, producing a distribution of forms of pedagogic consciousness. His view was that power creates, legitimises and reproduces boundaries between categories such as gender, race, class and categories of discourse (2000 pp.4-5). There are elements of Bernstein's work that resonate strongly with the central focus of my thesis and highlight the curriculum challenges that face the higher education sector.

In his exploration of power and control *within* education, Bernstein (2000) was interested in determining how patterns of domination existing outside of education are relayed through pedagogic communication. While he focussed on schooling, I would argue that his analysis applies equally to the higher education milieu. Through an analysis of the structure of institutions and discourses engaging with both the form and nature of pedagogy (Beck, 1999 p.226), Bernstein emphasised the disjuncture between those communication codes used within the home, and those



used within schooling. He found that while the home code of middle-class children tends to be more 'elaborated', with a style that is similar to the style used within schools, the home code of working class children tends to be 'restricted' and limits these children's access to schooling success. These codes are also relevant to academic discourses required by learners within higher education. Middle-class students are more likely to be ready to use academic discourse than working class students who will have to learn the discourse upon entry into higher education. What this means for curriculum practice is that it should take into account these differentials and curricula should be changed to reduce this disadvantage. As applied to higher education, and more specifically to DUT, this suggests that it would be beneficial to adopt more critically reflective and insightful curriculum practices, taking into account learners' backgrounds and understanding the difficulties of gaining epistemological access to academic discourses (Morrow, 2007).

In his doctoral thesis, Moore highlights the differentiation between 'the macro-level of the broad arrangement of disciplinary knowledges, and the micro-level of particular curriculum structures within individual institutions'. He describes the conceptual tools that Bernstein has developed to enable us to differentiate knowledge forms at a macro level, 'firstly in terms of the inherent structure of the knowledge, and secondly in terms of the relationships between bodies of knowledge' (Moore, 2003b p.58). Forms of knowledge are realised in two discourses which Bernstein calls 'horizontal' and 'vertical'. Vertical discourses are more evident in the more highly specialised and strongly classified knowledge fields which take the form of a 'coherent, explicit, and systematically principled structure' that is hierarchically organised (Bernstein, 1999 p.158). Bernstein describes horizontal knowledge structures as being more characteristic of the social sciences and humanities. This form of knowledge is one that is everyday knowledge potentially or actually accessible by all. It is 'common because it has a common history in the sense of arising out of common problems of living and dying' (Bernstein, 1999 p.157). Bernstein describes the knowledges, competences and literacies of horizontal discourse as segmental, 'contextually specific and `context dependent', embedded in on-going practices, usually with strong affective loading, and directed towards specific, immediate goals, highly relevant to the acquirer in the context of his/her life' (1999 p.163).

Bernstein's investigation into the ways that 'modalities of elaborated codes' (2000 p.xvii) within education are relayed by pedagogy, led him to distinguish between two principles representing all pedagogic communication: classification and framing. Bernstein (1975) refers to the classification of educational knowledge in his description of the relationship between contents. He maintains that where there is strong classification, contents are separated from each other by strong, clearly-defined boundaries, whereas where there is weak classification the boundaries between contents are less defined and tend to be more permeable. Classification therefore speaks about the relationships between disciplines and the boundaries between these disciplines within a specific pedagogic context. Further to this, 'power relations are realised in the principle of classification', particularly in the degree of insulation between what Singh calls the categories of agents (educators and learners), discourses (subjects) and institutional contexts (laboratories, classrooms). These symbolic categories 'are constituted through the generative relations of power' in which boundaries are created, legitimized and reproduced, thus establishing 'legitimate relations of social order' (Singh, 2002 p.578).

Bernstein describes framing as the 'strength of the boundary between what may be transmitted and what may not be transmitted in the pedagogic relationship' (1975 p.50). Framing is therefore about control, and within institutional pedagogic practice would refer to the nature of control over content selection, sequencing, pacing and criteria for its evaluation. Strong framing would mean that the educator controls the abovementioned aspects of pedagogic practice while weak framing would mean that learners have more control over these features. Framing refers also to hierarchical educator-learner relations and their control. Bernstein (2000) maintains that classification and framing strength can vary independently of each other, so that within a specific context strong classification can exist alongside weak framing and vice versa. Within the higher education context, through both the curriculum design and its implementation, as well as in the pedagogical relationship between learners and lecturers, the principles of both classification and framing operate to establish and maintain power relations and to exercise control over the learning environment.

Bernstein's (2000) work on horizontal and vertical knowledge and his analysis of classification and framing seem to have particular relevance for the questions asked in this study about the way that curriculum development practices are understood and constructed in response to the shifts in knowledge production. In acknowledging the shifts in knowledge production and reproduction, there is recognition that substantial shifts are needed in higher education institutions' understandings about what and where knowledge is produced, who can legitimately produce it and how it needs to be produced and learnt. In Bernstein's (2000) view, the *instructional discourse* (selection, sequencing, pacing and criteria of the knowledge) is always embedded within the *regulative discourse* which are the rules of social order. He argues that the regulative discourse is the dominant discourse and that although within a weakly framed regulative discourse there can be weak or strong framing of instructional discourse, within a strong regulative framework, the instructional framing must also be strong (Bernstein, 2000 p.13). This is significant for the South African higher education context in which there is a strong regulative discourse. A legislative framework (regulative discourse) regulates higher education provision including curriculum, with the concept of a programmatic approach straining to meet the needs of social and economic discourses that include both external influences, including globalisation, massification and managerialism, and internal influences including the need for social redress and economic growth. Higher education curricula are bound by additional constraints which are regulatory, including the NQF and a mandatory outcomes-based approach. Bernstein states that where framing is strong, there are visible pedagogic practices and explicit rules (2000 p.14). Although there are explicit rules governing our higher education system, including those for pedagogic practice, the national privileging of multiple policy discourses (see Chapter Two) and the lack of clear guidelines for pedagogic practice, can lead to tension, confusion, uncertainty and unwillingness to implement the changes. There is an expectation that academic staff within institutions will make shifts in their curriculum practices to accommodate the somewhat contradictory discourses articulated within national policy and discussed in Chapter Two. This expectation fails to take into account institutional and individual interests and the issues of power and control that form part of pedagogic relationships and influence curriculum practice.

In respect of classification, technicist models of curriculum are more likely to be strongly classified and to favour the clear separation of subjects and an approach by curriculum developers that closely guard their own rather narrow areas of expertise without necessarily paying attention to the context in which they are to be taught. Further than this, the design of curricula focuses on the development of individual subjects and very often the gaps and overlaps among subjects remain unexplored as each lecturer concentrates solely on delivering the particular subject allocated to her/him within the teaching timetable. This means that there is little coordination among subjects within a programme and each person takes responsibility only for a specific subject. Within the Higher Education sector universities and technikons have had different guiding documents. Technikons have been guided by NATED 150<sup>19</sup> (DoE, 1997b), a document which provides guidelines for the development of curricula for each learning programme for the purpose of obtaining government funding. These guidelines contain a list of the subjects to be included in the programme and the number of credits which are linked to lecturing periods allocated to each subject. Universities, on the other hand, until recently guided by NATED 116 (DoE, 1999a), were provided with a broader set of guidelines that included the names of the learning programme, number of total credits and other codes relevant for the funding of the learning programme. This set of guidelines did not, however, specify the subjects to be offered within each programme, thus providing universities with opportunities for more flexibility and discernment in the choice and weightings of offerings. The regulative discourses of technikons were much stronger than those of traditional universities. These different approaches in the guiding documents indicate that the technikon sector was expected to provide to the Department of Education more details of their learning programmes and that there was less flexibility in respect of the design of each programme. This has served to encourage an inflexible model of curriculum development that is slow to respond to change and has carefully maintained boundaries between subjects.

The close relationship between knowledge and curriculum is also evident in the application of Jürgen Habermas's three knowledge interests to the field of education

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<sup>19</sup> NATED 150 (1997b) is a Department of Education policy providing guidelines for the funding of technikon programmes.

where they have been linked with three educational paradigms that are based on different understandings and uses of knowledge. The technical interest has given rise to the empirical-analytic sciences, with educational research conducted using behavioural science research methods. This mode of educational research grew out of Tyler's linear 1949 paradigm, which is described in Schubert (1986). Subsequently there existed a technical rationality in curriculum development which became increasingly mechanistic and positivistic (Schubert, 1986). Grundy explains that 'what counts as knowledge...is governed by a fundamental human interest in explaining, explanations providing the basis for prediction and predictions providing the basis for the control of the environment' (1987 p.12). Thus the type of instrumental knowledge generated within this technical paradigm is based on empirical investigation, experience and observation and is often generated through experimentation (Grundy, 1987). In my work as an academic development practitioner at DUT, there was much evidence of this paradigm. The curriculum tended to remain fixed and was viewed as immune to the contextual reality within which it was presented. Grundy states that a curriculum informed by the practical interest is process rather than outcomes driven, with curriculum design seen to be an ongoing process involving interaction between educators and learners to make meaning (Grundy, 1987; McKenna, 2004). This focus on interaction can be seen in the definition of curriculum construction as 'an ongoing activity that is shaped by various contextual influences within and beyond the classroom and is accomplished interactively, primarily by teachers and students' (Cornbleth, 1990 p.24). The critical or emancipatory paradigm for curriculum inquiry focuses on the impact of 'race, socioeconomic class, and gender on education, quality of life, outlook on life, and capacity to grow and become more fully liberated' (Schubert, 1986 p.177). This approach to curriculum inquiry not only seeks to emancipate and empower individuals, but also looks to challenge social power relations and to transform them (McKenna, 2004).

The discussion above suggests that while knowledge and curriculum are separate concepts, different views of knowledge directly influence the form and nature of curriculum approaches which are underpinned by different knowledge interests. This influence occurs through their 'recontextualisation' into curriculum (Bernstein 2000,

p.35). Having discussed the two concepts that frame this study, the chapter moves onto an investigation of the extent to which curriculum design is being impacted by and is responding to changing modes of knowledge production.

### **3.3.2 Modes and shifting curriculum practices**

Within higher education, modes of knowledge production are recontextualised into curriculum. According to Bernstein (2000), recontextualisation comprises the rules whereby knowledge is moved from one educational site to another. Ideologies are not surface features of knowledge but are structured into the selection, organisation and teaching of the curricula. Dominant power and control relations then regulate how cultural reproduction occurs through curricula.

The Mode 1 and Mode 2 debate focuses strongly on knowledge production and what this means for research practices within universities (Nowotny, Scott, & Gibbons, 2003; Gibbons, 2000; Rip, 2000; Kraak, 2000). In a paper called '*What Kind of University: Research and Teaching in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*', Gibbons' focus is on advancing his theory that modes of knowledge production are shifting. Despite the title of the paper, any acknowledgement of changing modes of knowledge production occurring within and impacting on teaching is secondary. His emphasis, as in other books and papers, is on the changes taking place within *research* practice, and there is only a passing reference to the relevance of the shifting modes of knowledge production for *teaching* and curriculum design. He suggests that each mode of knowledge production can be accommodated within a university and states that 'each can provide a basis for curriculum development' (Gibbons, 1997 p.1). However, his question about what a trans-disciplinary curriculum would look like, remains unanswered.

Gibbons argues that decisions within universities should be less about deciding 'whether a university is to be a research or a teaching institution than deciding between which modes of research – and teaching – to invest scarce resources' (1997 pp.9-10). He claims that he has been trying to persuade readers that 'there are now two co-existing modes of knowledge production – mode 1 and mode 2', and asking questions about their co-existence. His questions include asking how the

results of Mode 2 research will be 'absorbed by the wider academic community and, through them, make their way into the development of new curricula?' (Gibbons, 1997 pp.9-10). These questions are quite disconcerting because implicit within them seem to be assumptions about the place of Mode 1 and Mode 2 knowledge production in our institutions.

The participative nature of Mode 2 knowledge production, with its focus on teamwork and problem solving, trans-disciplinarity, and the involvement of experts from different intellectual backgrounds and organisational settings, is very challenging for those working within higher education (Gibbons, 1997 p.7). This challenge is presented by current university structures which need to be modified to accommodate and support developing partnerships that characterise Mode 2 knowledge production (Gibbons, 1997 pp.7-8). In 1997 Muller predicted that educating for Mode 2 would 'push us in the direction of programmes rather than disciplines or disciplinary departments, managerial control rather than donnish dominion, towards the end of disciplinary insularity, and towards an era of higher education as a set of relays in an extended open learning system: perhaps even towards the end of higher education as we know it' (1997 p.184). The canonical position adopted by universities has been 'that higher education works best when it is allowed to steer its own ship according to its own lights' (Muller, 2005 p.90).

As predicted, there have been broad changes within the South African higher education sector that clearly show the influence of Gibbons et al's (1994) analysis of the shift towards Mode 2. The emergence of the Mode 2 knowledge production debate has seen an intention to shift epistemologically 'from the canonical, disciplinary knowledge systems to more "open" interactive and externally receptive systems' (Bundy, 2006 p.11). These intentions were discussed at some length in the previous chapter and include the shift from a closed higher education system to one that is more unified, open and responsive, in which boundaries are more permeable and in which institutional and industry partnerships are encouraged. Becher and Trowler claim that higher education is 'characterized by turbulent change, information overload, competitiveness, uncertainty and, sometimes, organizational

decline' (2001 p.4). According to them, this change has meant a growth in disciplines and a need for new academic identities.

This presents an enormous challenge. Higher education institutions have put structures in place that support and perpetuate Mode 1 knowledge production which, it is argued, has been 'eminently successful' (Gibbons, 2000 p.41). Universities tend to be discipline-based with clearly defined, often impermeable boundaries between each discipline. This disciplinary structure is a defining element of Mode 1 knowledge production, and is also used as 'an organising principal (sic) for teaching in universities', providing a 'framework for the content of undergraduate curriculum' (Gibbons, 2000 p.39). Gibbons maintains that the growth of specialist knowledge through research results in the transformation of discipline content, changes the curriculum, and contributes towards 'the differentiation of the disciplinary structure, introducing more and more specialisms' (1997 p.1). According to Gibbons, this disciplinary structure within universities creates a link that connects research and teaching, and underpins the argument that as they 'properly belong together' (1997 p.2), universities should be the sole custodians of the research enterprise.

Gibbons suggests that the increasing interest shown by higher education institutions in creating centres of technology transfer and other ventures aimed at assisting academics to 'commercialise the results of their research' is a model that 'is not so much wrong as out of tune with the research practices of Mode 2' (1997 p.8). He reasons that this model is one that has recognised that some scientific discoveries made by scientists within university departments are 'deemed to be capable of commercialisation but that there is a gap between the university and the marketplace'. The solution has been to establish a range of technology transfer centres to mediate between the academic and commercial worlds in order to 'bridge this gap' (1997 p.8). Given the above definition of Mode 2 knowledge production, it immediately becomes obvious that the model above does not embody Mode 2 intentions, research methods or modes of practice. Mode 2 knowledge production is usually initiated as a trans-disciplinary and trans-institutional partnership with active involvement and continued communication among the role-players throughout the process. Gibbons suggests that to operate at the leading edge of research,



universities need to be more entrepreneurial in the ways that they view and use their intellectual capital and 'ensure that they are able to participate in the appropriate problem solving contexts' (1997 pp.8-9). A concern expressed by Rip is that the categorising of knowledge production into modes is likely to restrict and impinge on its 'basic richness'. He argues for the heterogeneity of knowledge production practices that are not labelled as belonging to one or other mode (Rip, 2000 p.50). A further concern regarding the shift towards Mode 2 is that, in its focus on multiple knowledge production sites and the commercial value of trans-institutional and trans-disciplinary learning, it neglects the social redress and transformation agenda that is so important for our society. Muller cautions that '[l]earners traversing an articulated programmatic framework may be far from a curriculum for autonomous citizenship' (Muller, 1997 p.185). With the increasing emphasis on external accountability, it is inevitable that 'what we educate *for* will vary, perhaps infinitely, in terms of market or stakeholder demand' (Muller, 1997 p.185).

Although Mode 1 is attributed a place within this shifting landscape of knowledge production (as seen above), there is an underlying suggestion that the time for Mode 1 knowledge production has passed. In Gibbons' writing (1997, 2000) the focus is consistently on the *shift* from one mode to the other, and there is very little detailed explanation of how the two co-exist. Rip goes further and states that proponents of the modes debate argue that 'Mode 1 is obsolete, academics should be entrepreneurs, and interaction between universities, industries and government agencies are to be welcomed'. He suggests that because these fashionable labels are 'normatively loading' academics feel pressurised to react, and thus do so 'conservatively, opportunistically, or by embracing the new mode' (2000 p.45).

Both Mode 1 and Mode 2 knowledge production have a significant role to play in curriculum design within higher education institutions. Mode 1 conceptual grounding is needed before the learning can be manipulated into Mode 2 constructs for a particular purpose. Given my own particular interest in what the changing modes mean for those who are developing curricula, my purpose in this study has been to investigate the ways that selected academic staff members within one institution construct curricula and the extent to which their constructions align with the Mode 2

rhetoric that the UoT movement has used to position and market itself within the higher education sector. There has been a shift in focus in UoTs with the drive to improve research output, the introduction of skills units e.g., the Centre of Skills Development and Technology Transfer at DUT, and the focus on improving staff qualifications. Is there any recognition by those who are engaged in curriculum development that modes of knowledge production are changing and that there are implications for curriculum development practices? Are students being prepared to become knowledge producers? What does this mean for the curricula? What would a curriculum look like that was designed to prepare learners to become knowledge producers? By exploring these issues, this thesis extends and makes overt the significance of changing modes of knowledge production for curriculum practice.

Rather than the results of Mode 2 knowledge production making 'their way into the development of new curricula' as Gibbons (1997 pp.9-10) suggests, the institutional approach to curriculum design influences the nature and focus of both research (post-graduate) programmes as well as under-graduate programmes. Modes of knowledge production influence all aspects of higher education including the structure and function of universities, management approaches, curriculum practices and teaching and learning approaches.

As already indicated, universities have traditionally had a disciplinary structure in which faculties, schools and departments usually operate with strong boundaries. Mode 1 learning legitimates this disciplinarity, with the emphasis on giving voice to the primary experience of only 'specific knowers, where legitimate knowledge or "truth" is defined by and restricted to the specific "voice" said to have unique and privileged insight by virtue of who the speaker is' (Maton, 2000 p.158). There was recognition early on in our democracy, through policy discourses which supported the notion of inter-disciplinarity and the growth of applied knowledge, that existing traditional approaches were out-dated. Examples can be seen in the NCHE report which states:

There is a strong inclination towards closed system disciplinary approaches and programmes that has led to inadequately contextualized teaching and research. The content of the knowledge produced and disseminated is insufficiently responsive to

the problems and needs of the African continent, the southern African region, or the vast numbers of poor and rural people in our society (NCHE, 1996a p.2).

At an epistemological level, increased responsiveness entails a shift from closed knowledge systems (controlled and driven by canonical norms of traditional disciplines and by collegially recognised authority) to more open knowledge systems (in dynamic interaction with external social interests, consumer or client demand, and other processes of knowledge generation) (NCHE, 1996a p.6).

With the release of both the White Paper (1997) and the Higher Education Act (1997) we see that universities were urged to programme their curricula. Policy-makers saw this as important for promoting inter-disciplinary learning with the aim of achieving 'a greater "relevance" in curricula widely perceived to be sunk in theoretical irrelevancies' (Muller, 2005 p.95). Moore suggests that in its policy of programmatisation, policy developers were anticipating 'significant shifts in the nature of academic practices, in the professional identities of academics, and in the forms of authority that are invoked to regulate curriculum decisions' (Moore, 2003b p.19). There was also an expectation that academics would 'relinquish a measure of autonomy' and 'produce curricula which serve external accountabilities' including firstly 'a responsiveness to broader social and economic goals, and secondly an accountability for achieving the cross-cutting learning goals stipulated for academic programmes as a whole' (Moore, 2003b p.19). These shifts in practice would require significant changes to the modus operandi of academics who, I would suggest, are deeply invested in the culture and practices of their own disciplines. Further to this, such changes would also require changes to the ways that higher education institutions are structured and operate, challenging the 'relationships between traditionally insulated disciplinary discourses' (Moore, 2003b p.19), and requiring more flexible administrative systems designed to support the emergence of multi-disciplinary curricula that would impact on all aspects of the organizational structure and systems.

The national policy discourse stressing the need for inter-disciplinary programmatisation (NCHE, 1996a) has not met with the overwhelming support of academics within higher education institutions. As discussed earlier, academics in

traditional universities have in the past enjoyed a large measure of curriculum autonomy, whereas technikons worked within a convenorship system<sup>20</sup>. Those working within professional disciplines have been accountable to professional bodies, but others have tended to take curriculum decisions independently of any external interference or any expectation of cross-disciplinary collaboration. The idea that the need for greater responsiveness would 'require new forms of management and assessment of knowledge production and dissemination', and would have 'implications for the content, form and delivery of the curriculum' (NCHE, 1996a pp.6-7) was seen as a cause for great concern. There was much resistance to what was perceived to be an encroachment upon academic autonomy. In my findings chapter I look closely at the degree to which the concept of programmatisation has taken hold and the ways in which higher education institutions have adapted their curriculum practices to accommodate this national policy discourse.

The influence of Mode 2 on the national policy shift towards programmatisation saw many of the institutional three-year rolling plans required by the Department of Education include curriculum programmatisation and inter-disciplinary teaching and learning at under-graduate level (Lange, 2006 p.46). So what is seen ten years after the publication of national education policy documents outlining the need for the higher education system to be more open and interactive (NCHE, 1996a p.6), more economically and socially responsive, more accountable to stakeholders and to change the way it operates to support inter-disciplinary curricula and outcomes-based approaches to teaching and learning? Despite the stated intentions of institutions to implement curriculum programmatisation, past practices have largely persisted partly due to the lack of clear policy guidelines making more explicit the new inter-disciplinary frames of reference. Ensor claims that '[i]n general, curricula in the sciences and humanities have altered in some respects, but remain fundamentally discipline-based'. She states that '[k]nowledge has been re-organized and repackaged, but there are no significant shifts towards what Bernstein might call an integrated curriculum' (2002 p.291). This claim that many institutions have resisted collapsing disciplinary boundaries and moving towards interdisciplinary

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<sup>20</sup> The convenorship system involved nationally developed curriculum (this is explained in more detail later in this chapter).

programmes will be explored in the data in order to consider the extent to which the substance of curricula have changed.

Different views of knowledge and shifts in modes of knowledge production do not go far enough in accounting for academics' responses to curriculum change. There are issues of identity that impact on academics' curriculum engagement, either constraining or facilitating the shift in their discourses and practices. The following section explores elements of identity as a theoretical frame, including an exploration of academic identity, institutional cultures and workgroups, academic leadership and individual agency and their influence upon the capacity of academics to change their curriculum practices.

### **3.4 Identity**

Wager states that '[i]dentity is understood as a psychological process relating to the dynamics between self and other' (2001 p.9). On the one hand, we identify with particular social groups e.g. family, religious etc, and our professional groups, but there are also things that are not shared. The processes of identity have much to do with the 'dynamic tension between these two aspirations: to be like others and to be different from others' (Wager, 2001 p.9).

So, is there such a thing as a South African identity? What role does our identity and culture play in education? In South Africa the apartheid system's racist policies came with a cultural discourse that emphasised cultural difference between people. We now have a young democracy with a Constitution whose aim is to promote non-sexist, non-racial, non-discriminatory practices where cultural differences are recognised and valued (Cloete et al., 1999). Legislation is in place and a number of institutions have been established to promote and protect human rights, to eradicate discrimination and to deal with issues of diversity. However, citizens often find 'particular atavistic allegiances' more 'compelling than national citizenly ones' (Ekong & Cloete, 1997 p.7) and we face the tensions between promoting national reconciliation, solidarity and unity while at the same time recognising our diversity.

As we saw in the previous section, the issue of culture is one that is complex and simply learning about other cultures will not 'necessarily result in common identity and social harmony' (Cloete et al., 1999 p.31 -2). Appiah (1997) promotes the idea that what we are dealing with is diversity of identities rather than cultural diversity. In the American example he uses, he argues that while there are clusters of traditional culture, for the most part the all-encompassing cultural environment of some time ago has virtually ceased to exist. Although Cloete et al. agree, they state that in South Africa, 'it could be argued that old-time cultures are still potent shapers of identity, at least in some parts of the country' (1999 p.31). These identities are shaped by our languages, religions, cultural rituals and backgrounds. Rather than setting up an oppositional relationship between the drive for national solidarity and the desire to accommodate cultural diversity, this change in focus allows us more alternatives in our search for societal and economic transformation. Taking this view, we are able to see that 'traditional cultures that used to provide unambiguous and stable resources for identity construction have become weakened, and identities have become disembedded' (Cloete et al., 1999 p.33). However, rather than feeling powerless to deal with this in the face of those who argue that any attempt to move towards national unity will undermine respect for and tolerance of 'cultural diversity', we can then make a 'more conscious attempt to re-embed identity in a stable field by assembling and appropriating resources from wherever possible (Cloete et al., 1999 p.33). Muller (1997) too grapples with issues of diversity, identity and knowledge in his debate about citizenship and curriculum. He explores questions of autonomy and maintains that curriculum transformation 'involves, on the one hand, a rethink of citizenship and the identity of the learner, and on the other, a careful understanding of the way that knowledge is produced, organised or distributed' (1997 p.199).

We must also take into account that cultural 'thinning' has been impacted by globalisation whose 'principal effect is to turn the semi-insulated world society of nation-states into an open network society' (Cloete et al., 1999 p.35). This has implications for knowledge production and distribution, and Muller (1997) claims that most current knowledge areas include both local and international knowledge. Ekong and Cloete ask whether there is a way of 'casting the question of curriculum development and change in a frame that accommodates and nurtures local cultures

whilst stimulating the expertise needed to compete successfully in the global mainstream' (1997 p.8). If we use an identity perspective rather than one that is cultural, we can focus on shared values and a conception of citizenship that promotes unity through diversity and sees curriculum as a vehicle for promoting and making evident the value of having a common citizenship (Cloete et al., 1999). This study will to some extent attempt to suggest ways that changes in curriculum discourses can lead to transformed practices that will find a balance between the global and the local and will contribute towards the building of our democracy.

My own understanding of social identity is drawn chiefly from the work of Gee whose writings direct attention to the transitive and dynamic nature of identity and the belief that we can act and interact as several different kinds of people at different times and in different contexts. Although Gee acknowledges an internal 'core identity' that 'holds more uniformly, for ourselves and others, across contexts', he explains that we have multiple identities related to our many societal roles (Gee, 2000 p.99).

Gee's four ways of viewing identity (shown in Table 3.1 below) in some ways depict a certain evolution of identity theory. By this I mean that ways of seeing identity have shifted through time and different perspectives on identity have been foregrounded at different periods and in different societies (Gee, 2000 p.101).

<b>Process</b>	<b>Power</b>	<b>Source of power</b>
1. Nature-identity:	a state developed from forces	in nature
2. Institution-identity:	a position authorized by authorities	within institutions
3. Discourse-identity:	an individual trait recognized in the discourse/ dialogue	of/with "rational" dialogue individuals

4. Affinity-identity:	experiences shared in the practice	of "affinity groups"

Table 3.1: Four ways to view Identity (Gee, 2000 p.100)

While there might be a presence of all these perspectives in our society, current social theories of identity centre on the idea that 'identity is constructed within the context of social institutions and relationships' (Henkel, 2005 p.156). These theories seem to have largely gained prominence over what Gee (2000) refers to as 'Nature-Identity' theories which focus on who and what we are by virtue of our 'natures' which lie largely outside of our control. Other theorists state that essentialist and liberal individualist theories have also lost their place at the centre of the debate about the nature of identity (Henkel, 2005; Trowler, 2008). Despite the shifts in focus, any temptation to view these perspectives as unrelated would be misguided, as identity theorists suggest that 'they interrelate in complex and important ways' (Gee, 2000 p.101).

The institutional perspective on identity that Gee (2000) refers to is related to one's position within an institution, usually determined by an authority outside of oneself. Although we might work towards achieving a particular position or being assigned a certain title, for example, we might meet the criteria required for becoming a university Professor, we cannot accomplish this on our own. In this case, the university will bestow the title on an individual who has met certain criteria, and with that title, comes a position or designated role within the institution that brings with it power. Gee explains that the process through which this power works is 'authorization', that is, 'laws, rules, traditions, or principles of various sorts allow the authorities to "author" the position of professor of education and to "author" its occupant in terms of holding the rights and responsibilities that go with that position' (Gee, 2000 p.102). It might be problematic if an institution has certain views about what it means to hold a certain position, but does not make those views clearly known to persons who have been granted a particular position.



In the case of a UoT, many lecturers are directly drawn from the world of commerce and industry. They are people with years of working experience in a particular profession and they identify strongly with the values and ethos of that profession. When they enter a university of technology they are assigned a title, for example, Senior Lecturer. This title brings with it certain roles, expectations and discourses that might be very different from the roles they are accustomed to within their professions. These professionals are expected to bring their expertise into their new role as educators within the institution and to adapt to a new assigned institutional identity and a different authority with unfamiliar rules. A disjuncture frequently occurs when institutional expectations are not made clear. If an individual does not understand or accept some of the duties she is expected to perform as a part of her position in the institution, there could well be some resistance to carrying out certain activities and the position might be perceived as being imposed. This has particular significance for my study and is explored in the findings discussion.

Gee's third way of viewing identity which he calls a 'discursive perspective', talks about an identity or characteristic that is attributed to an individual through her interaction with others. These individual traits are not achieved alone, and the source of their power is in the 'discourse or dialogue of other people', through which a person is recognised as having a certain personality trait. Gee maintains that while 'institutions have to rely on discursive practices to construct and sustain I-Identities<sup>21</sup>', people 'can construct and sustain identities through discourse and dialogue (D-Identities) without the overt sanction and support of "official" institutions that come, in some sense, to "own" those identities' (Gee, 2000 p.103). There is potential for confusion within individuals where the discourses around I-Identities contradict those identities (D-Identities) that are constructed through dialogue with colleagues and peers. Within an institution such as DUT, a particular lecturer in Civil Engineering might be described by her colleagues as a 'good' academic, someone who is able to contribute to the academic endeavour, to play by the rules of the institution and achieve sound student success rates. This individual might contribute to this view of herself by seeking to maintain that image through her academic activities. However, within her professional environment and in her interaction with

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<sup>21</sup>I-Identity is institution-identity, through which a position is authorized by authorities (Gee 2000)

other professional Civil Engineers outside of the institution, the same person might be viewed as a 'lightweight' who has lost touch with the latest innovations and developments within the profession. She is thus constructed in different ways by different people through their discourses, and while she might have actively worked to achieve the one identity, the other might be ascribed to her without her knowledge. Within Chapter Five of this study, the discourses used by academics will be a main focus of the discussion.

Gee's final perspective is one he calls 'affinity-identity'. He describes an affinity-group as the 'allegiance to, access to, and participation in specific practices that provide each of the group's members the requisite experiences' (Gee, 2000 p.105). People belonging to an affinity group might have very little in common with one another other than a set of 'distinctive social practices', and it is only through 'these practices and the experiences they gain from them' that their allegiance to these other people is created and sustained. Thus the process through which 'this power works, then, is participation or sharing' (Gee, 2000 p.105). A key feature of these affinity groups is that a person must choose to join them. Gee acknowledges that this issue is complicated in some circumstances, for example, in the business environment where there are attempts to create affinity-groups to develop 'certain practices that ensure that employees or customers gain certain experiences, that they experience themselves and others in certain ways, and that they behave and value in certain ways'. The purpose of such 'social engineering' exercises is usually to 'create a bonding among the employees or customers, as well as to the business, through the employees' or customers' participation in and allegiance to these practices' (Gee, 2000 p.106).

The introduction of outcomes-based learning in South Africa has brought with it attempts in institutions to create affinity groups that will champion these learning practices. Several projects were implemented at DUT, including those funded by the Tertiary Education Linkages Project (TELP), in which academic development and quality promotion staff worked with identified academic departments to encourage collaborative curriculum development and teaching practices designed to model good practice that could be rolled out to the rest of the institution. These projects

would be described by Gee as 'institutionally-sanctioned' (2000 p.107) attempts to create communities of practice (Wenger et al., 2002) with a distinctive identity as trail-blazers in the institution. An evaluation revealed that they had limited success, partially due to the fact that they were initiated not by a need perceived within the academic departments themselves, but through institutionally-driven projects. Gee states that we 'really cannot coerce anyone into seeing the particular experiences connected to those practices as constitutive (in part) of the "kind of person" they are' (2000 p.106).

Our interpretive systems enable us to recognise and understand an identity, and different interpretive systems enable people to 'actively construe the same identity trait in different ways' (Gee, 2000 p.108). Gee explains that an interpretive system may be 'people's historically and culturally different views of nature; it may be the norms, traditions, and rules of institutions; it may be the discourse and dialogue of others; or it may be the workings of affinity groups' (Gee, 2000 p.108). Notwithstanding these different ways of understanding identity, 'human beings must see each other in certain ways and not others if there are to be identities of any sort in order for a particular identity to exist' (Gee, 2000 p.109).

For the purposes of this study it is worth exploring the issue of discourse and identity, more specifically the ways in which institutions and people within those institutions 'work to construct and sustain a given Discourse' (Gee, 2000 p.111). When technikons were established, their focus was on the offering of undergraduate qualifications in order to prepare students for the workplace, and their value was seen to be in their close ties with industry (Winberg, 2005; Ogude et al., 2001). There has been some criticism of the training discourses that were prominent in this sector, with their emphasis on technical skills and their alignment with industry practices (McKenna & Sutherland, 2006; Winberg, 2005). Despite this, the technikons were seen to provide a credible service to industry and the institutional discourses constructed the technikons and their practices in particular ways. Academics working within these institutions recognised and sustained these discourses which became part of their own academic identities. This will be discussed in more detail in the findings of this research study in Chapter Five.

As discussed in Chapter Two, technikons recently sought to reposition themselves in the market, to rebrand themselves as UoTs and to shift their focus to 'compete' on an equal footing with traditional universities. Thus, while they were to maintain their focus on career-focussed offerings, there was a discernible attempt to move themselves away from previous perceptions of technikons as technical and skills based. Public discourses emphasised 'technology' and 'the interwovenness, focus and interrelation between technology and the nature of a university which constitutes a technological university' (CTP, 2004 p.10) The Committee of Technikon Principals embarked on a vigorous campaign to shift perceptions of technikons and a new set of discourses emerged, including 'technology transfer', 'applied research focus', and 'knowledge workers' (CTP, 2004). There was also an argument that such a change would lead to more recognition by professional associations; that there would be increased mobility for students and staff to other institutions both within and outside of South Africa; that these institutions would be the first choice for government, industry, parents and students; and that 'the problem of identity, profile and recognition which technikons experienced with international, professional educational associations, organisations, agencies and students' would be settled (CTP, 2004 p.9).

Attempts to shift the identity of these institutions have achieved a certain amount of success, with the renaming of all technikons as UoTs and increased National Research Foundation (NRF) research funding, but it remains to be seen whether or not this name change and apparent shift in focus will amount to any more than a rebranding exercise. Ironically, though, if the institutions' attempts at developing new institutional identities are entirely successful there is a further concern that the specific function which technikons have performed in providing workplace-focused diplomas might be diffused and confused in their bid to offer numerous postgraduate programmes. Based on my experiences of working within a particular UoT, the academic staff discourses have remained largely unchanged. In their research, McKenna and Sutherland state that 'in particular, training discourses underpinned much of the lecturers' discussion on teaching and learning. These discourses described the training aspects of higher education in fairly technicist terms such as the transfer of a particular set of steps to be followed in the workplace'

(2006 p.9). This understanding of skills is also reflected in this study of staff discourses and discussed in Chapter Five. What it suggests is that the academic identities of individuals working within an institution are deeply entrenched and are not easily influenced by shifts in national or institutional discourses. Henkel states that while identity may 'undergo substantial shifts', the 'possibilities for reconstructing identity are limited. Stability, coherence and continuity are implied in the institutions or communities through which identities are built' (Henkel, 2004 p.169). This brings us back to Gee's explanation of 'core identity' which can be defined through discourses. He maintains that 'each person has had a unique trajectory through "Discourse space." That is, he or she has, through time, in a certain order, had specific experiences within specific Discourses (i.e. been recognized, at a time and place, one way and not another), some recurring and others not' (2000 p.111).

An understanding of academic identity, its construction and transformation, is important in this exploration of curriculum discourses and the ability and willingness of academic staff to transform their curriculum practices. It is evident that policy change in this country is placing pressure on academics to 'adopt changing identities, to comport themselves differently in their relationships with each other and the outside world, and to prioritize changing values' (Moore, 2003b p.12). This discussion focuses on the nature of academic identity, understanding that there are 'cultural practices and discursive operations through which academics produce and reproduce academic meaning systems that appropriate, and confirm, their identities as academics' (Wager, 2001 p.4). Academic identities are 'forged, rehearsed and remade in local sites of practice' (Lee & Boud, 2003 p.188).

Wenger et al. (2002) describe a community of practice as a 'unique combination of three fundamental elements: a domain of knowledge, which defines a set of issues; a community of people who care about this domain; and the shared practice that they are developing to be effective in their domain'. Their view is that a shared domain such as those described above creates a feeling of common identity as well as a 'sense of accountability to a body of knowledge and therefore to the development of a practice' (Wenger et al., 2002 p.30). Communities of practice can

thus enable people to connect across institutions and departments which helps to bind a system 'around core knowledge requirements' (Wenger et al., 2002 p.20).

As was discussed in Chapter Two, higher education institutions have faced enormous challenges in dealing with policy-driven change. Clearly, different institutions have responded in different ways to the challenges they face, adopting institutional policies and strategies that they considered most suitable given their particular contexts. DUT itself faced not only the pressure to align their own policies and practices with new national policy, but also, from my point of view as a staff member, a badly-managed merger (CHE, 2008) evidenced in part by strike action and student protests, top management inefficiency, financial investigations, staff rationalisation and plummeting morale that left the institution with a nationally appointed administrator. Given these circumstances, there was little chance that the organisation would be in a position to support and foster communities of practice. Instead, staff within merged departments were left to form their own networks and communities of practice and, as a result, institutional and departmental boundaries were more difficult to break down. Chapter Five explores the data to identify the significance of academic leadership and institutional support for curriculum change.

Henkel describes what she calls 'idealist or essentialist conceptions of academia and of higher education' as 'accessible only to an intellectual elite' and whose essence is 'its development, nurture and transmission of a particular and intrinsically exclusive conception of knowledge' (Henkel, 2000 p.16). She suggests that this view of higher education as a system that is self-regulating and free from external pressures that might distort the pursuit of knowledge (Henkel, 2000) is one that, should it be so, is dissonant with the current shifts in higher education that are more focussed on linkages with industry, increased government steerage and more formalised ways of evaluating institutional performance. In fact, the issues of academia and academic identity construction are more complex and multi-faceted than the idealistic conception above would suggest. The relationship between the institution, the discipline and the individual's academic identity is complex, fluid and dependent upon both the individual as well as the functionality of the institution and the discipline within which the academic is working. During a time of higher education

reform, it stands to reason that policy, structural change and institutional uncertainty affect 'the working lives, values and identities of academics in higher education institutions' (Henkel, 2000 p.23).

Much in the same way that Henkel talks about those who worked in polytechnics in the United Kingdom, in South Africa technikon academics usually took up a career in which teaching responsibilities, rather than a research focus, took priority in their professional lives and identities (Henkel, 2000). With their change from technikons to universities of technology the spotlight has turned to the importance of applied research, with new initiatives, projects, incentives and financial rewards for UoT academics who publish their research outputs. In Chapter Five I shall discuss the challenges that this presents to those who participated in my study and the degree to which it impacts on their academic identity and agency. For university staff there could perhaps be the converse situation. Traditionally university academics have guarded their autonomy and academic freedom fiercely, focussing primarily on 'pure' research, and offering programmes of which few included a work-integrated learning component in their curricula. Henkel suggests that for the most part, 'academics engage with their disciplines or subject communities in HEIs [Higher Education Institutions] with their own traditions and values, which make their own contribution to academic identities' (2000 p.148).

### ***3.4.1 Academic identity and change***

The concept of identity has been of 'central symbolic and instrumental significance in the lives of individual academics and in the workings of the academic profession' (Henkel, 2004 p.167). Traditionally academics have been afforded stability and their identities have been legitimised through their disciplinary membership. There are many benefits of these communities of practice including developing professionally, keeping up with developments in the field and benchmarking expertise (Wenger et al., 2002 p.15).

When policy-driven systemic change occurs, individuals face both threats and opportunities which often challenge 'fundamental conceptions of self and self-worth' (Lee & Boud, 2003 p.188). With the onset of globalisation, a changing labour market

and current reform in South Africa, some of the pillars of academic identity are being challenged. South Africa's new policy environment has led to and is still resulting in significant shifts in higher education institutions. The policy-driven change has led to government steerage and a close scrutiny of higher education institutions and their members, who have also found themselves having to adjust to the impact of globalisation. They are facing pressure to 'locate themselves and compete in various forms of the market' (Henkel, 2005 p.159) by forming a variety of relationships that extend beyond the academic world. Academic work has thus 'come to embrace new and ever-more diverse forms of activity' (Lee & Boud, 2003 p.183), and there has been an 'increase in self-questioning, by both individuals and institutions, concerning the nature and value of the academic enterprise and their place within it' (Lee & Boud, 2003 p.189).

The focus on macro-policy revision and structural change has led to vociferous recent debate on issues of academic freedom, challenging 'the power and importance of the discipline in academic beliefs and working practices and, second, to academic autonomy, individual and collective, in the setting of agendas and the production of knowledge' (Henkel, 2005 pp.155-6). In the last chapter we saw the extent of systemic change in South Africa, and we should not underestimate the implications and challenges this has presented for higher education academics. An assessment of the 'implications for academic identities of these developments involves thinking about the nature and extent of change in the contexts of academic work, the organizational structures, roles and relationships and the epistemological frameworks.' (Henkel, 2004 p.173). Lee & Boud suggest that 'fundamental issues for any conception of sustainable academic development involving change and identity are, we suggest, those of fear and desire' which they claim are not only individual feelings but rather 'structurally generated and locally inflected within the ecologies of specific work sites' (2003 p.188). The loosening of boundaries and the shifts towards more collaborative modes of knowledge production and distribution are challenging time-honoured notions of academic identity. Although the dominance of the discipline remains a strong source of academic identity, it has also 'come under severe challenge as organising structure for knowledge production and transmission,



as guardian of academic culture, and as nurturer of academic identity' (Henkel, 2005 p.172).

Research shows that academics are not only strongly aligned with their disciplines, but that their academic identities are also strongly associated with their organisations and influenced by the institutional cultures. Hatch and Schultz refer to organisational identity as a 'dynamic set of processes by which an organization's self is continuously socially constructed from the interchange between internal and external definitions of the organization offered by all organizational stakeholders who join in the dance' (Hatch & Schultz, 2002 p.1004). Members of organisations 'not only develop their identity in relation to what others say about them, but also in relation to who they perceive they are' (Hatch & Schultz, 2002 p.1000). Currently higher education institutions are repositioning themselves, forging closer links and networks with industry and commerce, vigorously seeking corporate funding for buildings, innovations, programmes and other resources, promoting applied research and academic entrepreneurship and generally encouraging links between the academy and the world beyond.

### ***3.4.2 Institutional culture/s and curriculum change***

The issue of culture is one that is broad and complex. It is not my intention to engage in lengthy debates about the many different conceptualisations of organisational culture that abound and which Trowler (2008) describes in his most recent book. The unit of analysis for this study is the individual academic and this will remain the focus of my study. However, academics are profoundly influenced by their institutional and disciplinary contexts, and their academic identities are similarly impacted by the institutional cultures. Thus, the institutional cultures cannot merely be seen as a backdrop against which change is being undertaken, but rather as influential in either mitigating against change or providing support for the implementation of change. This assumption underpins my study and will be evident in the approach taken in this exploration of academic curriculum discourses.

While the literature includes studies in which theorists have identified different types of cultures existing within institutions, e.g. collegial, developmental, managerial, and

advocacy (Fullan & Scott, 2009), there are many models that include different variations of a number of characteristics. Rather than looking at types of cultures within institutions, I will use Becher and Trowler's description of culture as 'sets of taken-for-granted values, attitudes and ways of behaving, which are articulated through and reinforced by recurrent practices among a group of people in a given context' (2001 p.23). Institutions are complex organisations with their own sets of inter-connected assumptions and practices. In order to successfully implement curriculum change, we need an awareness of the institutional culture as a dynamic and open system that is closely related to 'broader cultural contexts' (Trowler, 2008 p.12). This understanding of institutional cultures is important for appreciating the complexity of introducing innovation and change into an institution.

### **3.4.3 Institutional workgroups**

Trowler suggests that too often there are 'multiple agencies and individuals attempting, without coordination, to improve teaching and learning' (2008 p.156). Within this study of micro-level individual change responses, I explore the data within the broader macro-context which includes both national and institutional conditions and structures, as well as the meso-level which Trowler describes as small groups that exist 'in the classroom, in the university department, in the curriculum-planning team, or in a hundred other task-based teams within the higher educational system' (2008 p.20). Trowler's (2008) view is that meso-level workgroups are often not considered as a level of analysis in higher education studies, and he suggests that in trying to understand teaching and learning, there needs to be more focus on the social interaction of small groups which play a significant part in the social life of individuals. Choosing the workgroup (rather than the institution or the individual) as his level of analysis, Trowler deconstructs teaching and learning (including curriculum) into eight parts which he refers to as 'moments' (2008 p.54). These parts or 'moments' which exist in different combinations and in interaction, relate not only to teaching and learning but also to issues of culture (Trowler, 2008 p.67). I am including a list of these moments below with a view to exploring the ways that some of them are manifested within the participants' responses:

- 1 sets of practices that are habitual and taken for granted
- 2 sets of tacit assumptions about what constitutes 'normal' behaviour

- 3 implicit theories about students, teaching, and learning
- 4 ways of expressing oneself and interpreting the words of others
- 5 conventions about appropriate and inappropriate practices in teaching and learning contexts
- 6 the flow of power relations
- 7 the creation of the 'self' in relation to others
- 8 attributions of meaning and affect to ideas, practices, and institutions.

(Trowler, 2008 p.55).

As in the case of institutional culture, workgroups too are open and dynamic systems with assumptions and values that can influence members, and in which the values and assumptions of members can influence the culture of the workgroup. A significant statement for this study is that 'workgroups also tend to ossify over time so that local structural factors cast their shadow over more agentic characteristics' (Trowler, 2008 p.24). It is not unusual for recurrent and regular patterns of behaviour to develop and become so normalised within the workgroup that they are invisible to participants in the group.

Any attempt to successfully transform curriculum needs to recognise that institutional cultures are not homogenous and static. Following on from this, it makes sense that the national imperative to transform curriculum should be effected differently within different institutions. An understanding of the assumptions, practices and values that exist within an institution and within diverse workgroups that operate within the context of that institution can impact on the successful implementation of change initiatives. This perspective gives rise to questions about the merits of adopting a uniform institution-wide approach to curriculum planning. A standard institution-wide approach that does not take into account the diverse assumptions, values and practices manifested in different groups within the institution is unlikely to succeed (Trowler, 2008). There also needs to be a common recognition of the curriculum problems that exist within that institution. Without this shared acknowledgement I would suggest that efforts to implement change are more likely to fail. This viewpoint is further examined in the findings in which I explore what the participants reveal about their own curriculum practices and the extent to which they recognise the need for curriculum change.

A discussion about the influence of macro-level institutional and meso-level workgroup cultures upon change responses would not be complete without considering the role that academic leaders can play in supporting the creation, maintenance or change of institutional culture/s. Whether they choose to exert it or not, academic leaders hold power and without their support for change, the chances of successful implementation are significantly reduced. For this reason, the next sub-section briefly considers some issues of academic leadership, acknowledging that this area of research is one that merits more attention than I am able to give it within this study.

#### ***3.4.4 Academic leadership and change***

While it is easy to criticise academic leaders and to blame them for any number of institutional ills, it is important to recognise that their role is not easy, particularly within the current context of national and institutional change. In Scott, Coates and Anderson's study, they conducted an online survey of academic leaders. Respondents were asked to provide an analogy best describing what it was like to be a leader within their context. The most common descriptions were 'herding cats', 'getting butterflies to fly in formation' and 'juggling' (2008 p.50) which give us some sense of their perceptions about the magnitude of their task. Academic leaders are expected to be strategically astute, to manage and enable staff, to be technologically literate, have legal and regulatory knowledge, have financial skills, manage resources, manage relationships and a host of other functions (Scott et al., 2008).

In his study on academic leadership, Ramsden (1998) identified several markers of an outstanding leader which included that they are able to bind a diverse group of people into a coherent organisation with common, unambiguous values. Fullan and Scott argue that 'turnaround' leadership is about leaders developing and supporting institutional cultures that are 'change-capable' (2009 p.24). It is only within an institution that is change-ready (see table 3.2) that we are likely to witness successful change. Most importantly in terms of this study, is that leaders can shape culture, either by modelling desirable practices, reinforcing them or actively discouraging negative practices (Scott et al., 2008 p.85). Unfortunately it means that

leaders can also model, reinforce and encourage bad practices, and can hold assumptions and values that are not aligned with those helpful to change.

The table that follows has been taken from Scott et al's (2008) report on their Australian study of change leaders. It articulates very clearly the findings of their study and provides a useful measure of what a change-supportive institutional culture might look like.

<b>A University Culture unsupportive of effective change management</b>	<b>A University Culture supportive of effective change management</b>
Endless meetings, poorly focused with no discernible outcome-a focus on talk without action. 'Contrived collegiality' or a tendency for group consensus to override taking hard, evidence-based change decisions.	A commitment to collective action - more 'ready, fire, aim' than 'ready, aim, aim, aim' - using carefully monitored pilot projects to learn how best to make a desired change work by doing it.
Decision-making is ad hoc, reactive and anecdotal; everything seems to be of equal importance and decisions are typically made on the run.	Evidence-based decision-making which is outcomes focused; consensus around robust data and research evidence not simply around the table; evidence of a more focused and proactive approach to management.
Lack of clarity about what really counts most to the university.	People know what is happening and what the key change issues are that affect them.
Communication overload where a 'shot gun' approach to using emails and memos is used and there is no indication of their relative importance or response to feedback given.	Communication is controlled, focused, targeted, personal and followed up with action. Key messages on what really counts are simply given in multiple modes and multiple locations.
Pockets of excellence which are unknown to others. General lack of	There is a systematic approach to identifying good practice, rewarding and

'connectedness'. Tendency to operate like a 'cottage industry'.	disseminating it. People know what is going on and who does what.
Intolerance of diversity or dissent. Tendency towards 'group think' & use of a call for either 'academic freedom' or 'consensus' as a key block to substantive change.  Small cliques of people being 'in the know' whereas many others are left out.	Recognition/toleration of diversity and encouragement of justified dissent. A push to take collective action on areas which the evidence shows must be addressed.  Decision-making is consultative, inclusive, decisive and transparent.
Individualised, competitive, isolated pockets of practitioners, without any shared institutional 'moral purpose'.  High levels of micro-political behaviour, passive resistance, anomie, back-room deals and 'back stabbing'.	Existence of a large number of reciprocal, informal networks and 'communities of practice' both within and beyond the university.  A 'can do' feel where people help and share ideas with each other in key areas.
Individual and institutional defensiveness about criticism or poor performance.  Unwillingness to question traditional approaches, structures, systems.	Willingness to face and address areas of poor performance.
Transfer of responsibility to others: 'why don't they'. Often associated with a heavy bureaucracy which is blindly rules-based.	Widespread acceptance of responsibility and accountability-'a why don't we' mentality.
People are cynical, uninterested or negative about the institution. There is a high staff turnover rate, continuous leaks to the press.	Staff are proud to be working at the institution. There is a low staff turnover rate.  A strong commitment to responsiveness

Staff are hard to access and unresponsive.  Institution is slow to respond and overly bureaucratic	and doing a quality job with students and other key beneficiaries of the university's work ... A commitment to equity, transparency and fairness.
Senior executive are isolated and show little interest or commitment to getting into contact with line staff or taking informed but hard decisions.	Senior executives are in regular personal contact with staff and their priorities for change are widely known and supported. They are highly respected for their skill, support and ability to take a tough but correct decision.
Staff work around poor performers and tolerate them not 'pulling their weight'. An unwillingness to raise unpleasant issues in the interests of social affinity.	Staff are interested in finding out key areas where they need to improve and then set about addressing these.
A primary focus on economic performance and buildings.	Strong support for the triple bottom line-economic, social and sustainability outcomes.
Limited knowledge of which staff are doing high-quality work or recognition of it.	Rewards for strategically important collaboration across disciplinary boundaries and between academic and support areas.

Table 3.2: University culture (adapted from Scott et al., 2008 pp.137-8).

Using evidence from Scott, Coates and Anderson's study, Fullan and Scott state that 'the current focus, culture, and structure of many universities is change averse when being able to work productively with change and implement needed reforms rapidly and effectively is critical to institutional survival, productive student outcomes, and national benefit' (2009 pp.33-4).

The extent to which this change aversion is true of the DUT participants' experiences is explored in Chapter Five which also uncovers the extent to which the participants

feel that the institutional culture is supportive of curriculum change initiatives and the degree to which this alignment, or lack of it, impacts on their agency.

### **3.4.5 Agency**

My understanding of agency is based on Knight and Trowler's view that human agency 'means that there is choice and that actions can be taken to maximise work satisfaction in the face of structural changes' (2000 p.72). Becher and Trowler suggest that the role of agency in change in universities includes the 'reception, interpretation and implementation of new policies and responses to changing environments by academic staff themselves' (2001 p.16).

The literature suggests that the context within which individuals work has a profound influence on their academic identities (Henkel, 2000; Moore, 2003a). These identities are linked with individuals' agency, or capacity and willingness to effect curriculum change. The policy-driven pressure for change has exerted 'pressure on both modes of knowledge production and forms of curriculum organisation' (Moore, 2003a p.122), which in turn is challenging the academic identities of those teaching in the higher education sector. Baxen and Soudien state that 'curriculum-making processes are by their very nature processes which are concerned with identity-making' (1999 p.138). It was with this realisation that I began to explore theories of identity and more specifically those of academic identity as a means to better understand the ways that participants in this study might act in their roles as curriculum developers within the academic context. The ways in which the academic identities were constructed in the interviews and their influence on how the academics in this study understand their role in curriculum development is discussed in Chapter Five.

University departments, within which disciplines are situated, are 'constructs of the enterprise, as well as being critical to its well-being' and through their membership of these groups, academics have been able to view themselves as belonging to a 'distinctive and bounded world, the normative power of which has been sustained to a remarkable degree by a nexus of myths, socialization processes and regulatory practices' (Henkel, 2004 p.169). Unlike the legal and medical professions, the academic profession does not seem to be a strong source of academic identity.



Despite some commonalities across disciplines, the profession is largely fragmented and the institutional and discipline influence may not facilitate the development of a professional identity that runs across disciplines and departments (Henkel, 2000).

Du Toit reminds us that even if the chief loyalty and professional identity of academics is to their specific disciplinary communities (both within and outside of their institution), they spend the majority of their working lives in the employ of universities which are complex institutions with 'diverse interests, functions, stakeholder constituencies and governance structures' (2007 p.25). Similarly, Clark (1983) states that while it is important for academic identity to be centred in disciplines, it should also be pulled together in institutions. The loyalties of academics thus extend from their own discipline to include other academics within the institution who have similar values and duties and from there their loyalties extend to the broader academic community (Jonathan, 2006). This has implications for new approaches to curriculum design that are encouraging the development of trans-disciplinary curriculum.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

The literature discussed in Chapter Three was intended to provide insight into the theoretical underpinnings for this study. In the discussion on curriculum the intention was to make explicit my own curriculum assumptions to provide insight into the understandings guiding my research approach and design.

The literature around knowledge production pointed to the ongoing debate about the emerging Mode 2 paradigm of knowledge production (Gibbons, 1997), suggesting that factors such as globalisation, marketisation and managerialism are challenging established university knowledge production practices and encouraging them to explore new and varied ways of constructing knowledge. However, the focus on compliance with the bureaucratic and complex requirements of the institutional restructuring has drawn attention away from curriculum transformation, including enquiry into suitable modes of knowledge construction, production and dissemination, the impact of globalisation and international market trends upon

curriculum, analysis of learner needs, and an examination of national and local technology and research needs.

In line with the socio-cultural approach adopted here, I have drawn upon literature related to institutional culture, academic leadership and the socio-cultural factors that play a role in the construction and maintenance of academic identities. The strength and stability of academic identities are strongly associated with academics' membership of university and disciplinary communities (Henkel, 2004) which also influence their individual agency. Particular attention was paid to the importance of understanding the assumptions, values and practices underpinning institutional and workgroup cultures and their influence upon the change positions of individuals. The shifts in institutional and departmental cultures that have occurred as a result of institutional change suggest that the academic identities of educators are being challenged and that academics are having to consider new ways of working.

## **Chapter Four: Research methodology**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter outlines the methodological choices I have made and the reasons for those choices which reflect my own focus and perception of what is important in addressing the research question. This investigation is concerned with exploring how academics construct curriculum and what their discourses reveal about their assumptions, values and practices. The three broad questions the thesis addresses are:

- How do academics construct curriculum?
- What curriculum discourses influence the curriculum approaches of these academic staff and their participation in the curriculum development process?
- What do academics' curriculum discourses tell us about the way forward for curriculum transformation?

I will begin by discussing my own positioning within the range of research paradigms before moving on to a discussion of the research design and process selected. My investigation into the curriculum discourses of academics operating within this highly complex and somewhat contradictory system with its differing discourses is challenging. With the pressures on academics to collaborate across disciplinary, and even institutional divides to develop trans-, multi- and interdisciplinary programmes that are 'responsive to South Africa's economic and social development needs and that conform to outcomes-based approaches to curriculum design', academics are being asked 'to adopt changing identities, to comport themselves differently in their relationships with each other and the outside world, and to prioritize changing values' (Moore, 2003a p.122). The complexity of this context needed to be taken into account in the design of the study. The research approach selected for the purpose of this study reflects 'the methodological requirements of the research question and therefore of the type of data that will be elicited and of how the data will be processed' and therefore gives coherence to the study (Henning et al., 2004 p.32).

## 4.2 Research Paradigms

Paradigms are described as sets of beliefs that guide action (Guba, 1990; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), but to suggest that there are firm boundaries between them would be misleading. Lincoln and Guba (2000) suggest that all paradigms are concerned with and take a different stance on seven main issues which are ethics and values, accommodation and commensurability, action, control, foundations of truth, validity and voice, reflexivity and representation.

Durrheim maintains that '[p]aradigms act as perspectives that provide a rationale for the research and commit the researcher to particular methods of data collection, observation and interpretation' (2002 p.36). Lather (1991) refers to four research paradigms, the first three of which are based on Habermas's (1972) three fundamental knowledge interests (discussed in Chapters One and Three). Lather's categorisations are positivist, interpretive, critical and post-structural approaches. Each of these paradigms reflects a system of thinking and practice that directs the research's ontology, epistemology and methodology (McKenna, 2003).

Although research paradigms are separated into neat categories for the purpose of explanation, there are overlaps and commonalities among them. This became evident in my own study which seems to embrace tenets of interpretive, critical and post-structural approaches, although the intentions of empowerment and emancipation that underpin the research, situate it within the critical paradigm. Before explaining why I believe my own inquiry is located within this paradigm, I must acknowledge the value of post-structural research. While the critical paradigm is described as being concerned with issues of justice and power (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005), this can also be said of research that falls within post-structuralism which is sometimes described as a theory of knowledge and language, recognising knowledge as 'localised, unstable and the product of relations of power' (Connole, 1993 p.21). McKenna states that in response to the critical paradigm which aims to emancipate individuals from powerful accounts of reality, 'in the post-structural paradigm the purpose is to deconstruct how the accounts of reality are created by discourses within a particular context at a particular time' (2004 p.38). The author's

power is also deconstructed and the 'focus shifts to the text which can itself be deconstructed into a multiplicity of meanings' (Connole, 1993 p.31).

McKenna points to the differences between critical and post-structural research as follows, 'In the critical paradigm, there is an aim of emancipating individuals from these powerful and "false" accounts of reality. In the post-structural paradigm the purpose is to deconstruct how the accounts of reality are created by discourses within a particular context at a particular time' (2004 p.38). In its intention to explore how academics are situated in terms of their capacity and will to transform curricula, the approach in this study to 'generating and legitimating knowledge' is emancipatory (Lather, 1992 p.89). The inquiry rests on the assumption that with more insight into socio-cultural values and assumptions, understandings of knowledge, teaching and learning, and existing power relations within individuals' working context, the possibility for emancipation from those forces constraining them will be increased. While acknowledging that contemporary debates focus more on comparing the critical realist viewpoint with that of post-structuralists, it is my emancipatory intention and focus on socio-cultural issues that I believe situate this study within the critical paradigm that I have used to guide my research.

The following discussion explores the location of my own study within the critical paradigm, enabling me to make explicit the connections between the theoretical paradigm I have chosen with the purpose of my study, and revealing aspects of my worldview that have influenced my choice.

#### **4.2.1 Critical research**

As with all other paradigms, the critical approach has 'explicit and tacit assumptions that guide inquiry' (Reeves & Hedberg, 2003 p.29). Critical theory maintains that some relationships in the world are more powerful than others, that some theorists enjoy more status than others, that some "intellectual currency" is worth more than others (Henning et al., 2004 p.23). Muffoletto states that critical theory relates to a concern 'with questions of power, control and epistemology as social constructions with benefits to some and not to others' (1993 p.4), while Popkewitz describes the function of critical theory as being 'to understand the relations among value, interest,

and action and...to change the world, not to describe it' (1984 p.45). I am drawn towards Giroux's description of critical theory as leading educators towards a 'mode of analysis that stresses the breaks, discontinuities and tensions in history...[and] highlight the centrality of human agency and struggle while simultaneously revealing the gap between society as it presently exists and society as it may be' (1988 p.51).

While the critical approach shares some features of the interpretive paradigm, it adds another dimension that emphasises the emancipatory nature of knowledge and social action as an outcome of the research process (Connole, 1993). Assumptions that are central to critical theory are those acknowledging the social construction of reality, the existence of unequal power relations, the role of ideology and a commitment to fundamental change (Prasad & Caproni, 1997). Critical researchers are intent on discovering the specifics of domination through power. However, power takes many forms: ideological, physical, linguistic, material, psychological, and cultural. Critical theorists generally agree that language is central in the formation of subjectivities and subjugation' (Rogers et al., 2005 p.371).

Working within this paradigm, researchers aim to promote critical consciousness and to break down 'institutional structures and arrangements that reproduce oppressive ideologies, and the social inequalities that are produced, maintained and reproduced by these social structures and ideologies' (Henning et al., 2004 p.23). Power relations in society are complex, with some groups being privileged over others and some ideas considered more significant and valuable than others. Reproduction occurs when powerful hegemonic values, assumptions, feelings and/or practices are internalised, sometimes unconsciously, even by those who apparently oppose them. Giroux states that the use of 'traditional language prevents educators from critically examining the ideological assumption embedded in their own language' (Giroux, 1988 p.2), while critical pedagogy serves to uncover the injustices that are kept silent and which maintain the dominant culture which has implications for relationships, interactions and transformation. Power can be liberating and oppressive, and is about 'relations of difference, and particularly about the effects of differences in social structures' (Wodak, 2004 p.199). Language is intertwined with social power, serving as a vehicle for expressing or challenging differences in power in social

structures (Wodak, 2004). Researchers are thus concerned not only with criticising unequal power relations, but also with shifting the balance and flow of power.

My particular approach to curriculum is one that supports the view that knowledge is socially constructed (Grundy, 1987), and reflects my concern with the extent to which the curriculum serves or critiques social structures that exist. Using a critical approach, this study seeks to explore the influence that socio-cultural factors have upon change responses of individuals within an institution with many of its own challenges. It is concerned with understanding the ways that the participants' discourses interact with international, national and institutional discourses and what this means for implementing curriculum change. As we have seen in previous chapters, the transformative elements within new national education policy exist alongside more neo-liberal discourses that lean towards the global trend of increased knowledge marketisation and educational managerialism. The intention is to uncover and understand the power of those issues and relationships that facilitate or mitigate against the empowerment of academics to transform their teaching and learning processes. This intention is aligned with Connole's view that '[r]esearch using critical theory aims at promoting critical consciousness and breaking down the institutional structures and arrangements that reproduce oppressive ideologies, and the social inequalities that are produced, maintained and reproduced by these social structures and ideologies' (1993 p.23).

This study's intention to uncover the tacit assumptions, existing values and established practices that inhabit our institutional and workgroup contexts (Trowler, 2008) is aligned with the commitment of critical theory to investigate how we construct everyday realities and consider our taken-for granted assumptions about them. The analysis is concerned with understanding the agendas that shape our realities and to explore the resistances and responses to these agendas. The assumption is that by making the values, practices and power relations more explicit, we will be better equipped to create successful change processes.

While acknowledging the criticisms levelled at critical research, suggesting that although seeking to resist hegemonies they are theories with an ideology of their

own that reproduce power relations and construct their own truth (Giroux, 2003; Rogers et al., 2005), I have tried to heed the warning that we should 'resist speaking for others, imposing our interests on theirs, in the quest for emancipation' (Connole, 1993 p.30).

Accepting that there are many different social and cultural influences upon the ways we live and work, my focus has been on exploring professional rather than personal factors, such as family backgrounds. My interest in making these choices has not been simply to narrow the focus of the study, but also to consider in depth the dominant interests and values within individuals' working contexts that impact upon and interact with their curriculum change responses. An exploration of the dominant discourses underpinning national and institutional policy, as well as institutional and disciplinary cultures uncovered in the data enables us to make explicit those tacit assumptions and power relations that inhibit change.

Within both the critical and post-structural approach, the influence of the researcher's identity is seen to be unavoidable and there is thus a need to be aware of one's own values and prejudices (McKenna, 2004). Throughout this study I have been conscious of my own position and role within the research process. As a middle-aged White female researcher, with my own socio-cultural background and set of assumptions and values that are integral to the way I live my life, I acknowledge that these beliefs have influenced the ways that I have approached this study and the choices I have made in the research design. The fact that I worked within the institution<sup>22</sup> from which this sample was drawn and had an intimate knowledge of the many issues and challenges around change processes within this working environment has clearly also played a part in the research process and will of necessity have a bearing on the reality of this thesis. Although there was always a danger that my own experience of the institutional cultures (as I saw them) would cloud my ability to hear what the research participants were saying, my awareness of this possibility has, I hope, limited the extent to which my own voice has been imposed upon the findings. In the introduction to this study I stated at the outset my assumptions about teaching and learning, my concerns about the socio-cultural

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<sup>22</sup> I resigned from DUT in March 2008.



issues and relationships that I believed were impacting upon the change processes and my sincere wish to see change happen in a way that benefits all of those who have a stake in its success. This self-consciousness is a feature of critical research in which researchers 'try to become aware of the ideological imperatives and epistemological presuppositions that inform their research as well as their own subjective, intersubjective, and normative reference claims' (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005 p.305).

#### **4.3 The research process**

Lincoln and Denzin state that the common denominator of good qualitative research is 'the commitment to study human experience from the ground up' (1994 p.584). This mode of inquiry can provide rich data and offers us a way of getting close to people's feelings, values and reactions without the researcher imposing her own conceptual framework on them (Hesketh & Laidlaw [no date]). The goal of qualitative research is 'the development of concepts which help to understand social phenomena in natural (rather than experimental) settings, giving due emphasis to the meanings, experiences, and views of all the participants' (Pope & Mays, 1995 p.44). Although there is a view that quantitative and qualitative research methodologies can co-exist and complement each other, the two approaches do reflect different worldviews and have traditionally belonged to different paradigms (Guba & Lincoln, 1992). Essentially though, it is the nature of the research question, shaped by a particular worldview, that drives the methodology.

Since the 1980s qualitative research methodologies have become more prominent and stress 'the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005 p.10). Using this approach I am able to explore issues in depth, openness and detail (Durrheim, 2002) and to understand not only what happens, but also how it happens and why it happens the way it does (Henning et al., 2004). As with more traditional research approaches, the qualitative approach involves sampling, developing study instruments, collecting and analysing data, and checking the validity of the findings.

In the sections that follow, I will describe each step of the research process undertaken and make explicit the choices made.

#### **4.3.1 The case**

Noor describes case study as 'not intended as a study of the entire organization. Rather is intended to focus on a particular issue, feature or unit of analysis' (2008 p.1602). For this study, I have chosen to explore a single case which Stake (1995) describes as a bounded and integrated system, although the parts do not necessarily work well. 'Case study is the study of the peculiarity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances' (Stake, 1995 p.xi). The study explores the curriculum discourses of eleven academics within a single University of Technology. As the intention of this study is to explore people's values, feelings and reactions, it has been situated within this domain which enables me to gain insight into these issues. This might be described as an intrinsic case study (Stake, 1995) as I was working within the institution and thus had an interest in understanding this particular case. I was aware that 'single-case designs require careful investigation to avoid misrepresentation and to maximize the investigator's access to the evidence' (Tellis, 1997 no page given). In keeping with Yin's recommendation (1994) about case study research design, this study includes research questions, a unit of analysis, logic that links the data to the propositions and criteria for interpretation. While recognising that the business of a case study is not generalisation but rather 'particularization' (Stake, 1995 p.8), that is, an understanding of the case itself, I was aware that the findings of this study might resonate with others working within similar environments. Yin (1989) stated that general applicability results from the set of methodological qualities of the case, and the rigor with which the case is constructed.

My decision about the size of the study sample was based upon the purpose of this study which was to conduct an in-depth and rich exploration of academics' curriculum discourses. I was comfortable with the idea of selecting a small sample of participants as the purpose was not to make broad generalisations but rather to use the data collected from a small sample to explore how these academics felt

about curriculum change. There are several South African examples<sup>23</sup> of recently completed doctoral theses in the field of academic development that have focused their research on small samples within single institutions.

#### **4.3.2 Data collection**

Noor (2008) claims that documentary evidence can cross-validate information that is gathered from interviews, and can also assist the research with the inquiry during interviews. One source of evidence used for this study was documentation, including past and current national education policy documents, Technikon regulatory documents, including NATED 150 (DoE, 1997b), Committee of Technikon Principals (CTP) documents, institutional policies and administrative documents. These official and unofficial documents and records were useful given that 'sometimes what people say may be different from what people do' (Noor, 2008 p.1604). They also add to the weight of evidence, thus enhancing the reliability and validity of the findings. However the primary data source was interviews and given that the goal of this study is to explore the curriculum discourses of academics within a University of Technology, the principal method used for collecting data was through interviews conducted with eleven academics working in the institution.

#### **4.3.3 Interviews**

As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, the unit of analysis upon which I have chosen to focus is the individual academic within her context. Having made this choice, I acknowledge that 'the social world looks different depending on where one places the analytical focus' (Trowler, 2008 p.55), and accept that my decision creates some analytical boundaries.

Before selecting the study sample, I arranged a meeting with the Acting Deputy Vice-chancellor: Academic (DVCA) and asked for permission to conduct the study within the institution. This was followed up with a letter from the Acting Deputy Vice-chancellor: Academic that confirmed he had given permission for the study to be

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<sup>23</sup> These examples include Volbrecht (University of the Western Cape), McKenna (Durban Institute of Technology), Boughey (University of Zululand) and Shay (University of Cape Town).

undertaken and for the data to be collected from DUT staff and official documentation (Appendix A).

I approached the head of Management Information Services (MIS) at the institution and requested a random list (Durrheim, 2002) of fifteen academic staff names from across the institution. Although my intention had been to collect data from twelve participants, I asked for more names in case some of the academics were unavailable. I asked for the names to be provided for me in the order that they had been drawn from the institutional database so that I could approach the first twelve on the list and then approach the other three academics on the list only if I needed them. I was also aware that if I found at a later stage that my data was not sufficiently rich, I could once again approach MIS and ask for more names to add to the sample. My sample was purposeful (Durrheim, 2002) only in so far as I stipulated that there should be academics selected from across the four faculties. I had also intended that the sample would be free of claims that I had selected only those academics I had worked with directly. I was aware that in terms of disciplinary practices and faculty values, differences may have emerged that were significant for the findings of this study. Thus although my aim was not to make comparisons across the faculties, my interest in the role that institutional and professional issues and relationships play in the curriculum responses of individuals influenced my decision to make this stipulation and not to focus on the number of individual factors such as race, gender, age or length of service at the institution that could impact upon these academics' curriculum responses.

Upon receiving the fifteen names from the head of MIS, I contacted the first twelve selected academics telephonically briefly explaining that I was conducting research and, if they were amenable, asking them for a convenient time to meet. Two of those selected had resigned from the institution and one indicated that she would not be available due to time constraints. I thus drew on the three remaining names on the list and also made arrangements to meet them to discuss the study. My intention was to explain the nature of my study and to ask the twelve academics if they would participate as interviewees. I had prepared an informed consent letter to be signed by those academics who agreed to participate in the study (see Appendix B). This

letter was signed by me and approved by my supervisor and the DVC:Academic. It explained the purpose of the study and the role that the interviewees would play in the research process.

I met with nine of the twelve participants to discuss the study and to ask if they would be involved as participants, giving them a clear idea of the intentions of the study and explaining what would be done with the data. I left signed copies of the letter of consent with them to read and consider, before signing and returning them to me. All nine of the letters were signed and returned. I followed up with a telephone call and made arrangements to meet with each of them at a place of their choice. The remaining three participants proved more difficult to meet and eventually I spoke to them telephonically, gaining their agreement to participate. I emailed the letters of consent to these three staff members who signed and returned them on the day of their first interview. After my first conversation with these academics and once they had had an opportunity to read the letter of informed consent, I telephoned them again, confirming that they were available and requesting an interview.

When asked where they would like to meet for their first interview, all participants agreed to meet at my office, indicating that there would be less chance of interruptions. Unfortunately, during the extended time period (eighteen months) over which the interviews were conducted and further conversations took place, one of the participants dropped out of the process and was never interviewed, leaving me with a sample of eleven academics. While I was initially concerned about this, I felt comforted by the knowledge that I was in a position to ask the MIS department for further names. I made a decision, however, to work with my sample of eleven and only to ask for more names if I found that the quality of my data was compromised by having too few participants. As it happens, I was satisfied that the data collected from the eleven participants provided me with the depth and richness needed. A table providing a brief biographical summary of the participants is included as Appendix C.

The participants were aware that the interviews were being recorded and in all cases my first in-depth interviews with them lasted between one and a half and two and a

half hours. Gubrium and Holstein state that ‘...we commonly search for authenticity through the in depth interview’ (2003 p.29). In most cases these interviews were followed up by further informal interviews and casual conversations in which I probed for more information about specific issues that had been raised through the research process. The initial interviews were semi-structured rather than unstructured (see Appendix D). In depth and open-ended interviews are useful, not only for their richness of data, as they enable us to collaboratively make ‘audible and visible the phenomenal depths of the individual subject at the center of our shared concerns’ (Gubrium & Holstein, 2003 p.29). Although the participants were encouraged to construct their own narratives of their views and experiences of curriculum development (Moore, 2003b p.85) and to talk freely about contextual issues and challenges, I was somewhat directive during the interviews, guiding and managing the sessions which were planned to occur at a pre-determined time and in a set place (Fontana & Frey, 2005).

This interview approach, which differs significantly from a more structured approach, not only contributes to the richness of data but is also more collaborative and is sometimes called ‘empathetic interviewing’ (Fontana & Frey, 2005). The use of this interviewing approach does have implications for validity, particularly in so far as the views expressed in certain parts of an interview may seem to contradict what was said earlier in the same interview or in an earlier one. Rather than viewing this as problematic, I take the view that in the same way as any other social interaction between individuals, interviews will also vary according to the level of trust between the two participants in the conversation, what they select to reveal or hide, how they are feeling at the particular moment of the conversation, and any number of other factors. As Henning et al. state, ‘How an interviewee sees herself in an interview situation will also have some bearing on the data that will be forthcoming’ (2004 p.52). Potter and Wetherell (1987) state that an awareness of the ways that different contexts induce different responses ‘is a central prediction of the discourse approach: widely different kinds of accounts will be produced to do different things. On the other hand, considerable consistency must be predicted if participants are producing their language in the light of sets of attitudes which are stable across different contexts’ (Potter and Wetherell, 1987 p.54). It makes sense that participants

bring their subjectivity, their values and assumptions and make choices which reflect their own positioning (Ensor, 1997).

A planned interview is a contrived social interaction which is 'not a free, naturally occurring conversation between partners who are talking as part of their everyday lives; interviews are contrived social interactions' (Henning et al., 2004 p.66). As is always the case, the power balance within these interviews was understandably asymmetrical, with the interviewer asking the questions, guiding the conversation and probing for clarification and more detailed responses. I was aware of this imbalance and tried to make the participants as comfortable as possible, given the particular circumstances. One of the ways that I did this was by being aware of my language use during the interviews, not interrupting the respondents and using interaction patterns with which I felt they could identify (Janks & Ivanič, 1992). While I avoided controversial statements and kept my input to that minimum needed to sustain easy conversation, I made no effort to maintain 'neutrality' or to avoid 'contaminating' the process as I support Gubrium and Holstein's view that '[o]ne cannot very well taint knowledge if that knowledge is not conceived as existing in some pure form apart from the circumstances of its production' (2003 p.33). Taking the view that an interview should be 'a site for the production of meaning' which provides an opportunity for 'purposefully animated participants to construct versions of reality interactionally rather than merely purvey data' (Gubrium & Holstein, 2003 p.32), I was keen to create a casual, conversational atmosphere, and a process that took the form of a conversation rather than a structured set of questions and answers. There is a danger that if the participant 'feels that she is simply answering questions posed by an authority, there is no true sharing of knowledge making, but clear and unequivocal supplying of information' (Henning et al., 2004 p.67). Once I had set the scene and briefly explained the research topic and aim, as well as their role in the process, I asked the participants to talk about their educational and professional backgrounds. I then directed the conversations towards the current institutional context and from that point, used their responses to guide my questions and probes while always being aware of the intentions of the study and taking the point that '[t]he interviewer can only go as far as the interviewee will let her and vice versa' (Henning et al., 2004 p.59).

To some extent the interview experience was made easier because the research participants were known to me as I was 'close to the action' (Prichard and Trowler, 2003 p.xv). With the exception of three respondents, I had worked with the participants in the past and at the time of the interviews was still involved in projects with some of them. I was acutely aware that some of the participants may already have formed opinions about my role as a curriculum developer within the institution and my 'position' regarding curriculum practices. In Moore's research, he talks of the influences on data collected through the interviews and the 'understandable impulse on the part of many respondents (especially more senior ones) to offer "public discourse", rather than the more nuanced accounts needed for qualitative enquiry' (Moore, 2003a p.121). I was cognisant of this, of my own role during the interviews, and tried to avoid encouraging particular types of responses from the participants. During a couple of the interviews in particular, initially there seemed to be noticeable efforts to gain my 'approval' and to articulate views of curriculum that they felt were aligned to my own perspective. In addition, there seemed also to be a tendency for some participants initially to emphasise their own role as curriculum development change agents, asserting their knowledge of curriculum processes, their support for national and institutional policy and their curriculum development expertise:

*I've engaged parties and I can see where the focuses are (P1)<sup>24</sup>;*

*I can understand where SAQA are coming from also in terms of curriculum and everything else (P1);*

*and a lot of this I found that...I...look I've been successful so I was doing something right in getting it right...but it's a hard process...it's a very difficult process... (P3);*

*and then I got elected into the professional board so I've been driving it from that process as well (P3).*

This seems to be common within interviews as participants naturally do not want to 'lose face' and although wanting their meaning to be clear they also want to present their 'preferred self' (Henning et al., 2004 p.77). What happened in these cases was that as the interviews progressed and the conversations gathered momentum, the

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<sup>24</sup> (P1) refers to statements made by Participant 1 during the interview process.



self-consciousness dissipated and the responses became less contrived and more relaxed. I think that the participants also became more aware that I was not looking for a 'right' answer and was genuinely interested in their own views. I was also very conscious of not making any judgmental responses and used a gentle, relaxed and conversational tone throughout. These shifts highlighted the complexity of being an insider interviewer who is aware of the environment about which the participant is talking. There is a constant awareness when analysing the data, not to search for what is 'real' or 'the truth', but to explore what the conversation reveals about the views of the person speaking.

At the end of each interview, I asked the participants if they had anything further to add or any questions they wished to ask, and a couple of the participants chose to continue talking. I concluded the interviews by thanking the participants and confirming that they would be available for further conversations and queries. I also confirmed that the interview transcripts would be available for their perusal and that I would let them know once the transcripts were ready, which I did. The initial interviews were followed up with more informal conversations, during which I met some participants in their offices and discussed some of the issues that had arisen during the initial interview but which had not been fully explored.

It had initially been my intention to have the interview recordings transcribed by someone else, but in the interest of becoming more familiar with the data I decided to transcribe the interviews myself. Although time-consuming, this process was extremely useful, enabling me to recall my experience of the interview process and assisting me with the analysis that was to follow (Henning et al., 2004).

#### **4.4 Data analysis**

Data analysis has sometimes been referred to as the heartbeat of the research process (Henning et al., 2004). I am aware that the integrity of the findings depends upon the quality of the social, linguistic and cognitive skills of the researcher in the production of data analyses and conclusions (Connole, 1993 p.37). This awareness caused me to consider very carefully the way that I positioned the research respondents in writing about them, and the language I chose to use in doing so. The

analysis comprises processes that are guided by the research intentions. The particular approach adopted within this study is one that examines texts 'for their effects rather than their veracity; the question is "what do texts do?", not "what do they say?"' (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002 p.159-160). The analysis processes include describing the data by classifying and reducing it (in this case through categorisation and coding) for the emerging of key concepts and patterns, interpreting the data by finding and discussing meaning in the data that has been collected and analysed, and explaining how the interaction process relates to the social action (Fairclough, 1992).

#### **4.4.1 Critical discourse analysis**

My critical approach has drawn me towards critical discourse analysis as a methodological framework for this study. Connole states that '[i]t is the *purpose* of the research that will have the most influence on the use of certain methods of data collection and especially data analysis' (1993 p.1). It is with this in mind and the belief that discursive practices can help to produce and reproduce unequal power relations through the ways that they represent things and position people (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997) that I made the decision to adopt critical discourse analysis as my primary method of data analysis. Before describing the approach to discourse analysis I have adopted, I will briefly discuss some notions of discourse and the commonly accepted practices and assumptions underpinning critical discourse analysis.

While discourse theorists have defined discourses in various ways, they seem to agree that a discourse is a set of statements that constructs a particular reality (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006) and shapes the meaning we give to our lives. Generally theorists look at discourses, focussing on describing and interpreting characteristics of speech and/or writing to determine underlying norms, values and beliefs of the speaker/writer about the topic or process being discussed. These theorists focus on a discourse as a set of statements that 'organises and gives substance to the manner in which a particular topic, object, process is to be talked about, in that it provides descriptions, rules, permissions and prohibitions of social and individual actions' (Kress, 1985 p.7).

Gee, a prominent discourse theorist, explains that discourse is ‘a socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group...or to signal (that one is playing) a socially meaningful “role”’ (Gee, 1990 p.143). He distinguishes between Discourse with a capital ‘D’ and discourse with a small ‘d’. He makes this distinction in order to be able to include more than just language in his concept of Discourse. He describes Discourses as ‘ways of being in the world, or forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, social identities, as well as gestures, body positions and clothes’. In Gee’s view Discourse is a concept that explicitly situates and embeds language in its larger social practices and is ‘always more than just language’ (1990 p.142). Within the context of this study, I do not maintain the distinction between ‘Discourse’ and ‘discourse’, although (understanding that discourse always refers to more than just language), I identify discourses (small ‘d’) in the data in order to be able to identify big more-than-language Discourses and say something about how these Discourses construct curriculum and how these Discoursal constructions impact on curriculum transformation.

In the case of this research, discourses refer to systems of meaning from which texts are constructed, understanding that each discourse is underpinned by tacit assumptions and values of what counts as ‘normal’ and how to think, feel, believe and behave (Gee, 1990 p.xx). My understanding that discourses can be reproductive or transformative (or both) and can be linked to both overt and hidden practices (Bennett, 1990 p.33) guides this thesis which considers what the participants’ discourses reveal about their interactions with both explicit and concealed institutional practices. The design of successful curriculum interventions to facilitate change would need to take into account these dynamics and to be aware of the many factors that impact upon change willingness.

While discourses can simply be seen as sets of statements on a particular area, in this study they are understood to structure knowledge and define social practices by limiting what it is possible (or not possible) to say and do with respect to the area of concern (McKenna & Sutherland, 2006; Kress, 1989). This has significance for my

study which explores academics' curriculum discourses with a view to identifying those issues and relationships that either mitigate against or facilitate the move towards transformed curriculum practices. By identifying and interpreting these discourses I am able to consider what they say about the ways that the individuals construct knowledge and view their academic identity or sense of themselves as academics.

Having decided to look at discourses from a socio-cultural perspective, I am also interested in considering how academics come to construct discourses in the way that they do. With the 1994 change in government, there was an emergence of socially transformative and economically-driven educational discourses and in Chapter Two I discussed the tensions between these competing discourses. The unconscious and powerful nature of discourses means that remnants of Fundamental Pedagogics from the apartheid era continue to construct much of our reality, even by those supposedly opposed to it. It is thus interesting to explore and reflect on how the influence of the South African education context, both past and present, is evident in the ways that they construct their realities.

An important observation for this study is Gee's assertion that we cannot teach people a new discourse by teaching them the rules, but that we need to make them members of the group by allowing them to be apprentices (1990 p.xviii). Murray suggests that 'three factors appear to influence the acquisition and development of professional discourse: exposure, verbal interaction, and motivation' (Murray, 1998 p.5). Perhaps Murray's factors can be extended to include not only professional discourses, but other social discourses too. My own curriculum development experience within the academic development unit of DUT has mirrored Gee's (1990) assertion that we cannot teach individuals a new discourse. In Chapter Three I considered the importance of institutional and workgroup membership for the reproduction of existing assumptions, values and practices operating within the group. If discourses and practices within an institution take on the power of being 'common sense', it can be extremely difficult to reflect on and challenge those discourses or practices (McKenna & Sutherland, 2006 p.16).

Terre Blanche and Durrheim claim that the aim of discourse analysis is 'to examine how discourses operate in a body of text, and this aim is achieved by showing how discourses relate to other discourses, and how they function on different occasions' (2002 p.163). Bennett states that discourse analysis 'can provide the means for the critical examination of text, allowing the subtle processes of discourse to be highlighted and challenged by the researcher' (1990 p.33). Parker cautions that discourse analysis should go beyond criteria 'for the identification of discourses, and consider the role of institutions, power and ideology' (1992 p.3). My own understanding of discourse analysis is that it enables us to search language for clues to the ways that the participants make sense of reality, as well as to the ways that the discourse is produced and how it is maintained within the social context (Henning et al., 2004). Terre Blanche and Durrheim advise that as discourse analysts, we should 'extract ourselves (to a degree) from living *in* culture to reflecting *on* culture' (2002 p.158).

Within this study I use an analysis of discourses in speech and documentation to explain the power relations and functions being served by the discourses that are foregrounded. The unpacking of discourses has enabled me to expose deep-seated hegemonies that, by their very nature, exacerbate the disempowerment of those operating outside of these discourses. In exploring the discourses academic staff use to construct the notion of curriculum and their own roles in regards to the curriculum, it was my intention to 'move beyond description and interpretation of the role of language in the social world, toward explaining why and how language does the work that it does' (Rogers et al., 2005 p.372). Wodak explains that language is entwined in social power, as it 'indexes power, expresses power, is involved where there is contention over and a challenge to power' and can be used 'to challenge power, to subvert it, to alter distributions of power in the short and long term' (Wodak, 2004 p.199). As 'frameworks for debating the value of one way of talking about reality over other ways' (Parker, 1992 p.5), discourses are powerful and cannot be seen as neutral. They both reflect and construct the social world and are 'caught up in political, social, racial, economic, religious, and cultural formations' (Rogers et al., 2005 p.373). Discursive practices may have major ideological effects – that is, they can help produce and reproduce unequal power relations between (for

instance) social classes, women and men, and ethnic/cultural majorities and minorities through the ways in which they represent things and position people (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997 p.258). Through discursive work we are able to look beyond the superficial and to search for meaning, which is 'laden with cultural value - the way that the participant has learned to categorise and organise her experience and then utter it in language' (Henning et al., 2004 pp.65-66).

As a tool for constructing reality, language is central to the analysis of an interview transcript (McCormack, 2000). Fairclough (1992) claims that language works to construct social relationships between people and systems of belief and knowledge and to construct individual identity. Conole suggests that 'we are "constructed" by a host of often contradictory positions'. These include 'the culture(s) in which we move, the social institutions which impact upon us in historical context all mediated through language, the impact of power relations and the unconscious'. This explains why 'we shift from one identity to another in ways which are neither coherent nor consistent' (Conole, 1993 p.31).

Through discourse analysis I have explored the ways that academics construct notions of curriculum, attempting to discover 'the meanings and beliefs underlying the actions of others' (Conole, 1993 p.37). However, one of the faults within my own research process that impacted negatively on my time management and caused me more than a fair amount of frustration, was my decision to categorise and code the data too early in the process. Coding is not simply about labelling parts of a document that are about a particular topic. It is a way to gain access to all data records that relate to a particular concept. It is also a way to bring parts of a category together so that we can think about what they say about the category and ask questions about how they relate to other ideas, thus enabling us to theorise about those relationships (Richards, 2005). Initially I used Nvivo software to store documents and to manage the data analysis. Although I did not use all the Nvivo attributes available, once I had explored the data for dominant discourses I found it useful to categorise and code the data, and then to organise the ideas within tree nodes which enable one to create hierarchies of ideas. Richards (2005) refers to three types of coding which she calls descriptive, topic and analytical coding. Aside

from descriptive coding which is about importing and storing information, I initially also used topic coding which involved allocating and labelling quotes and passages to identified topics. I then began the complex task of analytical coding which is a more reflective and interpretive process that involves a more thorough interrogation of the data, the creation of conceptual categories and gathering of data to explore them. It was at this stage of the coding process that I became aware of issues emerging from the data that I had not sufficiently researched. These were particularly around the areas of academic identity, culture and agency which featured strongly in the participant discourses. Subsequent to further reading and thinking, I was able to go back to the interview transcripts, to reconsider the initial categorisations of the data, create new categories and merge some existing categories. Although I continued to use the Nvivo software for my data management, I found myself going directly to the transcripts frequently and in the end, used these more effectively than I did the Nvivo package. One of the traps I had fallen into was to allow my own expectations of the discourses I had anticipated seeing to guide my analysis. By investigating additional literature and by going back to the transcripts I believe I was able to extricate myself from this trap.

Although the discourses initially identified were evident, the focus of my argument shifted with further thinking and explored the data within the context of the socio-cultural issues (within institutions) that interact with and influence individual discourses. The approach to discourse analysis was therefore not purely linguistic 'but sees the data as a socially constructed set of information that has been rendered useful because of the text of the data itself, because of the broader social and historical context and conventions within which the text has been created and the way in which it has been created' (Henning et al., 2004 p.46). While I may be guilty of not adopting a 'systematic application of a theoretical model' (Widdowson, 1998 p.137), by adopting a socio-cultural approach to this study in which context is seen as integrally related to the construction of curriculum, I have attempted not to fall prey to another criticism of some discourse analysis studies which is that they 'isolate the textual material as a discrete object for analysis thus extricating it from the context in which it is constructed' (McKenna, 2004 p.56).

The relationship between culture, identity and curriculum construction that emerged in the data analysis, was also significant in shaping the structure of this thesis. Despite the overlapping relationship among the three discourses I had selected from the data as most relevant to my research questions, for issues of clarity and ease of reading I made the decision to separate the discussion of each discourse into a separate chapter. Further to this, I used my own experience of the institutional context, including my attendance at staff curriculum meetings, departmental advisory board meetings and any other fora that involved discussions about curriculum issues to inform the study and add to the richness of the data. I also had access to learner guides<sup>25</sup> and other curriculum documents for those courses offered by the participants. These documents are useful as they carry meaning independently of what the authors' intentions were (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). They revealed interesting insights into the participants' curriculum discourses and were effective for complementing what had emerged through analysis of the interviews, thus contributing towards the fullness of my findings (van der Mescht, 2002).

The issue of construct validity is one that has been considered problematic in case study research, particularly with regard to investigator subjectivity (Tellis, 1997). However, using case study protocol and multiple sources of evidence can remedy this. There are those working within post-positivist paradigms who refer to their use of multiple sources as a means of providing evidence of their scientific rigour and the validity of their findings. The issue of using multiple data sources for the purpose of triangulating the data and therefore improving the validity of the findings is one that van der Mescht suggests is borne out of the positivist paradigm and 'each step away from the objectivist position decreases the potential to triangulate findings' (2002 p.48). His view, with which I agree, is that a combination of methods that are underpinned by different assumptions 'is unlikely to result in a coherent and cohesive picture. They may present a fuller picture, but not a more objective one' (2002 p.48).

Rather than relying on triangulation as a measure of validity, I turn to Durrheim's view in which he suggests that validity is defined 'by the degree to which the

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<sup>25</sup> Learner guides are compulsory documents intended for use by students to inform them about the aims of the subject/module they are studying, and to outline the outcomes, assessment criteria, subject content, teaching approaches and assessment tasks.



researcher can produce observations that are believable for her or himself, the subjects being studied and the eventual readers of the study' (2002 p.46). I am mindful of Lincoln and Guba's reference to ways that researchers can improve the reliability and validity of their findings. These include 'thick descriptions' of the process, clear explanations of the arguments for choices of methods and a sufficiently dense description of the context, collected data and findings (1985 p.315). This allows 'readers to evaluate for themselves its applicability to other contexts with which they are familiar...It allows the reader to more fully know and appreciate the object of research than is possible through other research approaches.' (Prichard and Trowler, 2003 p.xvii). I have also attempted to ensure the alignment between its ontological and epistemological underpinnings and the research methods I have used (van der Mescht, 2002). Aside from having an audit trail of changes to the study design, reflexivity and awareness of the role that my own beliefs and values played in influencing the discourses that emerged from the data, the participants were given the opportunity to review the data they provided and parts of this report were read by critical readers familiar with the institution.

Research is often valued for its ability to suggest generalisation which usually refers to findings that can 'hold good over long periods of time, or across ranges of cultures' (Payne & Williams, 2005 p.297). Qualitative research methods can produce an intermediate or 'modest' type of limited generalization, described by Payne and Williams as 'moderatum generalizations'. These are not attempts to produce sweeping statements and they are open to change. They are, however, 'testable propositions that might be confirmed or refuted through further evidence' (2005 p.297). While the focus of this study is on the discourses explored in the daily practice of higher education at one site, I believe that these debates and issues are resonant in other contexts.

#### **4.5 Ethics**

In an effort to ensure the 'dignity of individuals' (Cohen & Manion, 1996 p.360), certain ethical matters were considered<sup>26</sup>. Durrheim and Wassenaar state that '[t]he

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<sup>26</sup> Ethical clearance: Appendix D.

essential purpose of ethical research planning is to protect the welfare and the rights of research participants, although there are many additional ethical considerations that should be addressed in the planning and implementation of research work' (2002 p.65). Three ethical principles identified by Durrheim and Wassenaar; autonomy, nonmaleficence and beneficence (2002 p.66), underpin this research study. Voluntary and informed consent of the research participants was obtained, and they received a 'full, non-technical and clear explanation of the tasks expected of them so that they can make an informed choice to participate voluntarily in the research' (Durrheim & Wassenaar, 2002 p.66). They were 'assured of the parameters of confidentiality of the information supplied by them' (Durrheim & Wassenaar, 2002 p.68), had the freedom to withdraw at any stage and the right to anonymity in the publication of the research.

Henning et al. state that participants 'need to know that their privacy and sensitivity will be protected and what is going to happen with the information after recording' (2004 p.73). At the start of each interview the participants were informed again about the intentions of the study, and I obtained their permission for the taping of the interviews and explained the analysis approach. My focus on building a broad picture of some of the curriculum discourses at DUT without making comparisons between different departments and faculties meant that I was able to remove any reference to a particular department or person. Proof of the institutional ethical clearance for this study is included as Appendix E.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

Having described and discussed the research methodology employed for this study, I will now move into an analysis and discussion of the data and the findings of the research.

## **Chapter Five: Discourses of change**

### **5.1 Introduction**

A number of discourses were evident in the data; the three discussed in this analysis were those most closely related to curriculum. These are discourses of change, discourses of identity, and discourses of knowledge and they have been selected for their impact on the ways in which the participants understand and relate to curriculum. Taking the view that our curriculum discourses reflect our worldview, in particular our assumptions and beliefs about knowledge and learning, and in line with the research question, this analysis explores how participant responses to change, their views of knowledge and the ways that they construct their academic identity together construct a range of curriculum discourses.

For ease of reading, the data analysis is presented in three chapters. This chapter describes the first discourses, those of change. Chapter Six deals with discourses of identity, more specifically those of academic identity, and Chapter Seven explores discourses of knowledge. It is at least in part contrived to separate these discourses as they function together to create conceptions of curriculum. Rather, it is a pragmatic convention that necessitates such a separation of discourses.

This chapter begins by focusing on understanding the range of responses to change expressed by individual academics within an institution, exploring the discourses that construct these responses. The exploration considers change discourses in terms of what the data reveals about the participant responses to the broad international and national shifts that are taking place and looks into the ways that they are experiencing the changes. This is intended to offer an initial glimpse into the worldview of the respondents in this study in relation to the broad changes taking place.

### **5.2 Discourses of change**

Chapter Three included discussion of the many macro-level changes that are impacting on academics' working lives. The challenges facing us stretch beyond our borders and include massification, marketisation and managerialism which Singh refers to as 'the unholy trinity' that underpins 'global discourses of higher education

reform' (2006 p.64). Despite the many criticisms of globalisation discussed in Chapter Three, Kraak states that globalisation also provides positive developmental challenges for a country such as South Africa (1997). While this might be so, the study participant responses revealed very little acknowledgement of fundamental global-level changes to their ways of working in the world. Those who did mention change at this macro-level, did so in passing, without elaborating on what this meant for their work: *'we're in a global market...we're in a global environment...we need to start thinking globally...start thinking outside of the box...not just for the African continent'* (P1).

The global trend towards managerialism in higher education is evident within many institutions (including DUT). There has been a shift towards managerial governance that includes rhetoric and characteristics that have been appropriated from the business environment, including strategic planning, performance management systems, cost centres, organisational restructuring and line management (Shore, 2010; Wright & Rabo, 2010). The autonomy of academics is compromised by the demands made upon them by a style of management that Apple (2003) refers to as managerialism: an approach that is designed to discourage dissent and make sure that people become more responsive to client demands and external judgement. Seepe warns that *'[w]hen silence reigns in the academy when a leader of an institution proudly proclaims that he is not an academic then there is cause to worry'* (2006 p.57). In keeping with this shift described in the literature, participants in this study also expressed their concerns about the increasing administrative burden. They felt that they were weighed down by an inordinate amount of administration: *'the demands in terms of administrative work are getting more and more and more'* (P1). For some participants this caused much frustration and concern that the academic endeavour was being compromised:

*you may be required to produce certain documentation or to change your guides<sup>27</sup> so that they follow a certain pattern, then you have your academic load, then you have your own research, then you have the students you have to supervise, then you have the students you must monitor in industry* (P4).

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<sup>27</sup> The guides referred to here are Learner Guides. These are course outlines which are mandated by institutional policy for distribution to students at the start of each module/course.

Interestingly, while these participants expressed deep concerns about their administrative loads, they did not seem to make the connection between their individual experiences and the idea that they were part of a larger trend within higher education. Similarly, their concerns that the institution's management appeared more concerned with issues of financial viability than with academic matters were also not attributed to international and national shifts in the higher education sector.

Aside from the increased focus on efficiency, neo-liberalism, the dominant ideology underpinning globalisation, has also brought with it increased external regulation and more quality control mechanisms that impact upon the ways that academics do their work. Seepe claims that we have 'become victim to a culture of audit and a vulgar form of managerialism' (2006 p.56). Audits, a concept borrowed from the world of finance, are being undertaken for all higher education institutions in South Africa, both private and public. The audit criteria used for institutional audits are open-ended, enabling institutions to self-evaluate and gauge their own strengths and weaknesses, before being evaluated by a panel of their peers and members of the CHE. It could be argued that in this country, where there has been much concern about the quality of education provision within some institutions, external audits might serve as developmental tools to assist with quality improvement where needed:

*all that paperwork that you have to produce now and again, make copies of this or file that and whatnot...generally I also know that is necessary because you know from that mock audit that I talked about where a person coming in will not know that you're doing such and such if you do not show him that this is how I do it, and this is evidence, so it's quite necessary to have those things but where's the time because you're supposed to do teaching, you're supposed to be doing other things as well, manage as well, go to meetings, you know those things...(P5).*

There is however a danger that unless there are capacity-building initiatives, institutions without strong academic management and sound quality management systems will read and interpret the evaluation criteria in very narrow, prescriptive ways.

The external regulation of institutions has not been well-received in all quarters, although Seepe claims that audits 'justify public confidence and demonstrate accountability for the effective use of public and private funds' (2006 p.59). There are those who assert that the power and status of professionals is being reduced and that there exists a certain mistrust of university academics' ability or will to do their work without an external regulatory environment. While this view might be prevalent within traditional universities which have not previously been subjected to national quality assurance evaluations of the work they do, those who have worked in technikons are more used to external scrutiny of their programmes<sup>28</sup> and there was little concern expressed by the study participants about national level quality processes:

*There's always been an agreement and as I came in that was the case, that all the technikons that are offering the programme will have to do one thing, you can't be autonomous about it because we are serving a professional board so there has to be agreement, and also maybe you know that there was SERTEC before where they would come in and check across the institutions that you know whatever curriculum was offered was the same and standards and all that, so I'm not saying people should police people but there need to be structures that maybe are constantly... looking across the departments whether you're doing what you're supposed to do (P5).*

At the time when these participants were interviewed, DUT had not yet been through an external audit. However, the DUT staff had already been placed in teams to prepare the documentation for the audit and one participant had this to say about the preparation process:

*I was [involved] in the beginning but the whole thing was disbanded...I just find it over-elaboration...total over-elaboration...all the faculties and everyone getting involved and...look, I mean as far as I can see it's perfectly simple...the institution either has or hasn't got the systems...policies and procedures...if it hasn't we're in trouble, if it has and they're not adequate that's fine (P2).*

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<sup>28</sup> This scrutiny was undertaken by SERTEC, discussed in more detail in an earlier chapter, and previously described as a pre-1994 quality council specifically established to accredit and evaluate technikon offerings.

While the staff had not yet had the experience of undergoing an external audit, they were accustomed to a culture of internal monitoring and evaluation and having regular programme reviews conducted by the institution's Centre for Quality Promotion and Assurance. The study participants complained about the increased paperwork entailed in preparing for the reviews:

*I think what has happened in the past couple of years and because of quality issues as well there's a lot more administrative functions that a lecturer has to perform now (P1);*

*Quality assurance...compliances...and I'm not saying it's a bad thing...we used to in the old days when I arrived here we used have meetings at the end of the year...we used to sit down sensibly as a staff and we used to report on our activities in our disciplines for the year and we used to say what we were going to change but the difference is now you've got to write a bloody ream of reports to tell everyone what you've said and done (P2).*

They did not however voice any strong objections to the concept of reviews, which they seemed to accept unquestioningly as a part of the 'technicist quality assurance processes, with which technicians were ready to comply' (Winberg, 2005 p.194). This discourse of compliance is reflected in the responses of some participants:

*Going back to...to that audit [Programme Review]...the quality thing...I enjoyed the experience. It made me realise there's a lot that needs to change within the department (P1);*

*Preparing for it was interesting in that...it was a fruitful exercise because it sort of refocused...it made people reflect...are we really doing this and so on (P4).*

The literature suggests that the global focus on efficiency in higher education presents challenges for universities which will need to adapt and change their practices to align with international trends and to guard against embracing neo-liberal managerial discourses that value marketisation more highly than academic endeavour (Shore, 2010). In the case of these participants, however, their responses reveal few concerns about shifts in educational discourses and trends that might impinge upon their academic autonomy. Instead, what emerged from the data was that their concerns were focussed on the micro-level, on the ways that their

day-to-day work is impacted by policies and procedures, rather than seeing the issues impacting on them as part of a broader design or trend.

As discussed in Chapter Two<sup>29</sup>, there have been several systemic changes to the education and training system since 1994. Aside from the challenges discussed above, there have also been enormous national shifts in the ways that teaching and learning are understood. These changes, including the implementation of an NQF and outcomes-based teaching and learning approaches, form an important part of the macro-level context that is exerting pressure on academics to change the ways that they work as discussed in Chapter Two. Further to this, the size and shape of higher education (discussed in Chapter Two) has been significantly altered with the establishment of UoTs to replace technikons and the merging of several institutions into different combinations and types of institutions. The NQF has recently been modified<sup>30</sup> to clearly distinguish between general academic qualifications and those that are vocational. Within this framework, the UoT qualifications fit snugly into the vocational stream, suggesting a further move in national thinking towards market responsiveness and the creation of a skilled labour force. While this differentiation is not overt within the policy document, close scrutiny reveals that student movement from the vocational stream to the general academic stream has been made more difficult in terms of credit accumulation. Gamble cautions that this route will invariably lead to a 'downward vocationalisation at precisely a time when all indications point to the need to establish the vocational route as a viable alternative to schooling, without restricting the occupational chances of those who take this option' (Gamble, 2004 p.xx). While UoTs have always considered their role to include the preparation of learners for the workplace, this policy distinction could be seen to endorse some current UoT curriculum practices which lean towards an industry-focus rather than placing a high value on the 'practices of a strong academic culture' (Winberg, 2005 p.194). Participant Two emphasises this point: *'we are an institution that's*

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<sup>29</sup> The implementation of a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) was discussed in Chapter Two as was the registration of all qualifications with the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA).

<sup>30</sup> Department of Education. (2006). Policy Issued Under The Higher Education Act, Act No 101 of 1997.



*vocational...our training is basically aimed at preparing people for a specific career path' (P2).*

With an insight into the participants' discursive construction of these changes, this analysis will then begin to consider the extent to which the socio-cultural environment in which they work has played a part in influencing and shaping their curriculum-related discourses.

Curriculum design has not only been impacted by the establishment of a complex national framework, but also by the outcomes-based philosophy that currently forms the foundation of our education system. While the assumptions underpinning outcomes-based education were discussed in Chapter Two, an analysis of the respondents' discourses reveals that there are significant shifts required if this system is to be successfully implemented. The participants' understandings of knowledge and their ideas about the ways students learn reveal much about the ways that their curricula are constructed. In contrast to the outcomes-based teaching and learning approach which purports to value critical thinking and creative decision-making, the evidence from the data suggests that teaching practices in this institution are not dissimilar to those employed in traditional school classrooms. In this example from the data we see what Bernstein (2000) refers to as strong framing in the relations between lecturers and students, with the lecturer exercising her power over the students in much the same way as has traditionally happened in schools:

*I mean I go in there and I tell them straight you know what, at the end of the day students don't do homework I walk around and check...cos what I do is I carry a register and I check, do your homework, you sign my register...you don't do your homework, leave my venue, so I've got it as proof, no homework and I check it once a week (P6).*

This participant treated her students like naughty school children:

*there [in the classroom] I walk around and I can check homework, so I make their lives a living misery, so you know...you bunk my lecture the one day the next day I go for them, I just know... (P6).*

The lecturers' dominant view of knowledge was evidenced in the data as authoritatively given explanation and practice. The content to be mastered by

learners is already defined by the lecturers or by those involved in curriculum design. In this way, instruction consists of the transfer of knowledge from the lecturer to the learner. This dominant discourse was evidenced through comments such as:

*we do too much for our students and then we overburden ourselves and we have these long lecture times and long prac[tical] times and, you know, we're doing and the students are just kind of following us (P10).*

Within many of the practices described in the data we see strong framing (Bernstein, 2000) or boundaries in both the relations between educators and learners as well as in control over the selection of content and aspects of classroom management. This control serves to establish and maintain the existing power relations. This seems to be at odds with the curriculum changes that OBE was intended to bring. The data reflects no change in regards to how knowledge is constructed by these lecturers.

Probably the most contentious issue regarding outcomes-based curriculum development in South Africa has been the formulaic way that it has been conceptualised and implemented. In her thesis critiquing the implementation of the National Qualifications Framework in South Africa, Allais contends that providers seem to be translating it in narrow and rigid ways. She asserts that the model of national standards setting is restrictive, resulting in curricula that are strongly driven by qualification specifications (2007). In his comments about the way that outcomes-based curriculum development was being advocated in the institution, Participant Two was critical about the narrowness and restrictiveness of the approach being taken:

*I think it's very important that students know what they're going to do but I think the way that we are being coerced...required to present that in terms of [outcomes-based] learning guides<sup>31</sup> is way...way too...pre-emptive of what you would like to do during the year in terms of...moving the goalposts a bit sometimes...I find it very restrictive...I mean I think you should have a broad outline definitely and broad outcomes and...and you should have an idea of*

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<sup>31</sup> These learner guides form part of the curriculum development process. There is a template in which module details including outcomes, assessment criteria, assessment methods and schedules, content topics, contact times are written and given to students.

*the kinds of activities you're going to be involved in when you get there but I don't think you should have to spell out the days, and time (P2).*

This narrow focus is reflective of the approach taken within DUT, where the extent to which academics had moved towards OBE implementation was evaluated on the documentary evidence, e.g. subject learner guides, outcomes within qualification specification templates etc. A common approach evident in the data was thus one of documentary compliance that did little to change predominant traditional curriculum, teaching and learning practices within the institution. Participant Seven refers to the superficial way that OBE has been implemented:

*...the pressure comes from outside, and you have to write your outcomes and you have to write your assessment criteria, and it's like it's all fake. The way I see it, because at the end of the day I believe in OBE because it tries to shape a person, in terms of attitude, OBE has attitude issues in terms of content, in terms of application so OBE should actually be the ideal...the ideal education system (P7).*

Participant Four had this to say about the implementation of OBE within DUT:

*although we can be doing our documentation and our guides following the OBE philosophy...but some of the practices when you are delivering it could be anything because we are there individually...it could be conventional...you could still not find people saying okay this is a section we are going to do – these are the outcomes and so on (P4).*

In his response to the implementation of an outcomes-based system, Participant Four expressed his own discomfort with the imposition of this approach and the notion that other approaches have been discounted:

*It does make sense but I must say that perhaps the only difficulty has been...that it was something that...it sounded as emanating from government...you got a sense that someone from government, the minister, then decided that this is the philosophy that you've got to follow and many lecturers understood there are other alternatives to that philosophy and many of them were not as yet convinced that those were a dismal failure (P4).*

The data thus evidenced a resistance to some of the changes associated with the implementation of the OBE and the NQF. These national requirements were discursively constructed as being restrictive and the participants described their adherence to these demands largely in terms of compliance.

Only one participant referred to the benefits for students of implementing OBE. In her case, the department she worked in had made a strategic decision to explore outcomes-based curriculum, teaching and learning approaches and had assigned the participant the task of exploring different ways of teaching with a view to enhancing the experience for learners. The participant had the backing of her departmental head and was supported and encouraged to lead the department in the implementation of an outcomes-based approach. She spoke about her experience and how it had shifted her own perceptions about curriculum:

*that helped me to see that curriculum was the whole process that involved everybody and that it was the entire putting together of how we're actually going to get these learning outcomes delivered, so it did – ja it did, it changed my perceptions from that point of view, because to me curriculum was the same as syllabus, so I just looked at what's in the study guide, what are we going to learn, learn the content (P10).*

She also referred to the way that her different approach had impacted on one of her colleagues:

*he was very, very technically minded and everything was just that's it, that's it, that's it, and we were doing this whole, um, sort of looking at learner oriented kind of activity, and he did one of his portfolios in learner oriented group work type. He changed his whole curriculum around, his whole approach, his whole assessment method, everything, and he actually got excited about it (P10).*

It was evident that through the enabling micro-environment, this participant and her colleagues had felt empowered to make the shift towards outcomes-based curriculum, teaching and learning approaches.

For the most part, though, participant responses reflected a reluctant and superficial compliance with the demands of OBE. There was always a risk that the technikons

would narrowly interpret the new requirements to review and align their qualifications with the NQF levels and level descriptors<sup>32</sup>. However, there was widespread recognition among members of the National Curriculum Working Group<sup>33</sup> established by the Committee of Technikon Principals of the need for fundamental curriculum change that went beyond a compliance with bureaucratic national structures and requirements. One of the main challenges was to gain institutional support for implementing widespread fundamental change to curriculum approaches amidst established sets of technikon assumptions and practices, as well as enormous structural changes to the higher education system that resulted in differently shaped institutions with new management teams. These and other changes (including the institutional merger) meant that in the case of Technikon Natal, and later DUT, curriculum issues were not high on the institutional agenda. One participant expressed her view of the national changes and their effect upon the institution:

*I think there are too many changes on the part of the government as well in terms of you know signing the HE [referring to the Higher Education Qualifications Framework] document...taking ages because of...and that filters down to the institution and what is happening...why is there nothing happening...no quick moves...too many changes in the system...from an 8 level NQF to a 10 Level ...there's too many things happening at the same time (P11).*

As discussed in Chapter Two, the value of OBE has been widely debated. Referring to the international move towards outcomes-based teaching and learning, Smyth and Dow express their scepticism about its benefits to learners: 'We have yet to see any convincing evidence that this outcomes-oriented turn actually produces results that improve the educational or life chances of students' (1998 p.291). Aside from the academic critiques of OBE, the media in South Africa has published chiefly negative

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<sup>32</sup> Level descriptors are nationally developed descriptions of the level of applied competence and academic autonomy expected at each level of the NQF

<sup>33</sup> This group was established to coordinate and facilitate the technikon's response to national curriculum change imperatives. The group was chaired by a Deputy Vice-chancellor: Academic from one of the technikons and each institution had a representative in the group. The members were chiefly the heads of curriculum development within their institution and were mandated to implement (within their own institutions) the curriculum decisions taken at meetings and workshops. I represented Technikon Natal, and subsequently was a co-member for the Durban Institute of Technology (later DUT) together with my counterpart who had been the representative for ML Sultan Technikon prior to the merger.

articles about the philosophy of OBE, its lack of success in other countries and the controversy surrounding its implementation in schools. The widely heard criticisms of OBE have gained the momentum of fast-moving urban myths, with the most commonly heard comments sounding something like this:

*To me that outcome-based education to me should be another one thrown out just like the throughput rate [laugh]. I mean it failed in Australia, it failed in America, I mean...I mean what failed there is ever going to do well here? (P6).*

The participants' discursive construction of these national shifts in some small measure reflect the challenge of implementing complex and multi-faceted change within a system that has its own established values and practices. Not only have academics been expected to change their practices to align with national and institutional requirements, they have also had to learn a new language in order to interpret these requirements. The new education and training system has brought with it a proliferation of acronyms, a range of definitions and bureaucratic terminology that are largely inaccessible to providers. This is evidenced by comments showing the participants' confusion regarding the requirements: *'you know sometimes it's so strange and you're overwhelmed with the new terms and terminology' (P11)*. The assumption that those working in education and training would unproblematically assimilate this language into their educational discourse was misguided and served to alienate them from the new system. Furthermore, the focus on bureaucratic and technical changes<sup>34</sup> rather than on meaningful shifts that would result in the kinds of curriculum needed for the academic, social and economic development of our learners speaks to Allais' view that the conceptualisation and implementation of the NQF neglects the relationship between outcomes development and issues concerning curriculum content (Allais, 2007).

Participant responses reveal that the pressure these systemic changes have brought to bear upon them has been further increased by other significant shifts within their

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<sup>34</sup> These bureaucratic requirements included the submission to the South African Qualifications Authority of an outline of every qualification offered within every higher education institution. These submissions were required to be submitted within a prescribed template and included details of qualification rationale, purpose, exit level outcomes, assessment criteria.

environment. It was evident in our conversations that these academics had also been significantly impacted by the institutional changes which had taken place and in particular, by the institutional merger. While their change discourses around the merger also call on issues of institutional identity, it seems fitting that their responses are analysed within the discussion on discourses of change.

Identifying the strength of academics' institution-identity, which Gee (2000) describes as relating to the power or authorisation granted an individual by virtue of her position and designated role within that institution, is made more complex given the 2002 merger between ML Sultan Technikon and Technikon Natal that led to the formation of the Durban University of Technology. Having interviewed participants who had previously worked in either one of the two former institutions, it became clear that some of them still identified with the institutional culture, policies and working conditions that had been part of their former institutions (see earlier discussion). This meant that despite having been assigned roles within DUT and given authority to carry out their work, they continued to make unfavourable comparisons to the conditions in their previous institutions, and felt that they had been forced to adapt to a situation not of their own making:

*well I...I've noticed that it's...I mean since we've merged it's been...it's been a bit of a dictatorship really, I mean you know we get very little input into...you know policies go around, there's not enough time to look at them and they just get passed and some of them try to get slipped under the table and things like that, um so it's a very heavy-handedness you know that's emerged, whereas when we were at ML it was more of a democratic kind of a...where everybody had input and that type of thing, that's just my perception (P9).*

It was evident from what arose as a general trend in the data, that participant curriculum engagement has been profoundly impacted by issues relating to the institutional merger discussed in Chapter Two. Durban University of Technology (DUT), with approximately 20 000 learners, is a recently-merged institution of two former technikons with significantly different resources, cultures and staff racial profiles (Chalufu, 2002). Many DUT academics have viewed the merger process as one fraught with conflict, tension and uncertainty. This is supported by Jansen who

states that in all cases the impact of mergers ‘has been devastating for the emotional and professional lives of all staff’ (2004 p.172). The participants in this study expressed a sense of frustration in the face of all the uncertainty and changes that they believe are being imposed upon them. This emerged as a significant trend throughout my interviews with participants who all constructed the institution as a site of conflict and tension, and certainly highlighted for me the extent to which the environment within which we work impacts upon our academic identity and our motivation and ability to work productively. It is with this in mind that I have chosen to foreground the participants’ experiences of the merger and its impact upon their work and morale.

Although some of these participants had been drawn from particular departments that had not had to merge<sup>35</sup>, their perceptions were still coloured by the institutional merger. Thus almost without exception, the participant references to post-merger DUT revealed varying degrees of discomfort and resentment. Participant Two summed up the views expressed by many of the participants with the following statement: *‘this whole institution has been riven with internal politics since the merger’* (P2).

The merger concerns of participants were wide-ranging, and included complaints about the lack of institutional leadership:

*I feel really, really sorry that when you have people who truly are committed and who truly want to be better at what they do that...and like the so-called leaders that we have...um there are a number of people I really find very...I can’t respect at all...and they’re supposed to be my...I find that very difficult, um I just think you need to have strong leadership* (P8).

Another participant stated:

*I’ve given the best years of my working life to this place...I think most of us have...and I’m not going to let the department die...I’m not going to let the*

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<sup>35</sup> When the two institutions merged there were some programmes (and departments) that were unique to one or the other institution. At the time of merger these unique departments were left intact, but still experienced much of the discomfort and frustration mentioned by those in merged departments



*department collapse or whatever because of...you know the management cannot do this or do that (P1).*

Both ex-Technikon Natal and ex-ML Sultan Technikon staff felt similarly impacted by the merger and by post-merger management decisions that they felt were arbitrary and unilateral, resulting in their personal disempowerment:

*the master cracks his whip and you right down in the ladder so whatever happens you're the guy taking all the beating' (P1); 'when it comes to sensitive matters...well if I decide this department should close tomorrow it will be closed and someone decides (P4).*

There were tensions that had manifested as a result of staff feeling that their own institutional culture had been lost: *'internal politics, unions, students, academics, external council members caucusing in groups according to political allegiances'* (P2). There was a sense that their value was unacknowledged and that whichever institution that they had worked in prior to the merger was being subsumed by the other institution:

*...then straight away we had the ML process imposed on us which is much more rigid and a bit more laborious and time consuming and that (P3);*

*Firstly we belonged to a different faculty when we were ML where things were done differently, I don't know, like um things were done differently... processes were different and... (P5);*

*I think there's a culture of also where we came from at TN ex-TN where we didn't have this authoritarian uh uh uh what do you call uh mindset (P1).*

The lack of post-merger management and guidance resulted in a great deal of distrust. The data shows that rumours abounded about faculty structure, department closures, new departmental head appointments, physical relocations and deals being made behind closed doors: *'I sat down and I thought that's it...I mean I...because...it was like so...it's so nebulous, it's like you don't know who you can trust and how to work there' (P8).* The issue of staff morale was raised repeatedly by all participants:

*management needs to realise is if they not going to start sorting these things out...people like me...you're going to kill our spirits and I can feel it sometimes I wake up in the morning and I ask myself... (P1);*

*...so for the older staff it's much more complicated and you can't cope and sometimes you go down with it (P11);*

*...you always not sure of your future...if you think am I Black enough (laugh)...you are shaken irrespective of whether you are Black or White then you decide, hey perhaps I must dust off my CV... (P4).*

Most participants referred to the deterioration in conditions, including institutional, faculty and departmental management, all of which were constructed by the participants as obstacles to curriculum innovation:

*this year the students...they openly are talking about the malaise in the dept, they talk about the lack...I mean how incredibly badly organised it is (P9); whatever plans we could have put in place for our department in terms of expanding and offering new courses and things like that was stunted (P9).*

One participant expressed his view that more institutional support would improve staff motivation:

*if you...find that the institution is giving you enough of its developmental capacity so that you can execute what you need to at the appropriate time...and the other monetary compensation is not always...there could be other incentives that propel people to better achievement (P4).*

There were also complaints about the physical environment in which the staff worked:

*Also in terms of capacity...space capacity...we went from a 1200 sq meter building...a first world facility...to a third world facility...I mean that was a workshop. The electrical supply isn't up to standard (P1).*

Other participants had similar complaints:

*I've become enemy number one in this uh technikon, the lights...like three lights work...I had to send 5 emails to get the rest of the lights to work... there's no aircon, no fans, I mean you're [the students] paying your fees, what are you getting? (P6);*

*there are only two data projectors and one is not in working order and instead of fighting for the machine you decide to just use the OHP you know ... (P11); we taught while construction was taking place, we taught under trees...and our students didn't like that...uh...we were taken to the newspapers (P3); I think we've got a bit of a sick building syndrome going on there so from that respect I think our quality of life has deteriorated immensely (P9).*

A significant factor that was attributed to the institutional merger was the increased workload, and in particular the additional administrative burden that staff felt was impacting on their ability to focus on their teaching role:

*it's this huge admin, its co-ordinating the service departments, it's doing the timetables, the learner guides, the clinical manuals, the duty lists for the hospitals, and that doesn't show anywhere on your timetable (P10); now you've got to write a bloody ream of reports to tell everyone what you've said and done...now I think people are just pissed off because they have to produce documentation (P2); the workload it's heavy and it's showing generally because you know how the performance of the lecturers would be in a normal situation but you can see that they're stretched' (P5).*

One of the participants who was most critical of the institution was a foreign national from a Francophone African country. Having studied in France and taught in universities there as well as in his home country, he expressed dismay at the amount of paperwork and lack of academic autonomy within the institution. When referring to people's attitudes towards curriculum change, he expressed his view that the amount of paperwork involved was impeding progress and had this to say:

*the bureaucracy that's what people shy away from, including me, I came here to be a teacher, I came here to communicate the passion to students, I didn't come here to write reports, so leave me alone (P7).*

The disgruntlement and dissatisfaction was evident in the participants' change discourses. It was difficult for staff to identify with an institution whose values, assumptions and focus seemed at best unclear and at worst, destructive to the

morale of the staff. A dominant feature of the institutional culture that evolved out of this uncertainty and that is reflected in the data above, is one of discontent, ranging from resentment, frustration and anger to apathy and resignation. This is not to suggest that an institution has a single, stable identity or culture, but what is certainly evident in the data collected for this study, is that these participants lacked confidence in the institution's management and did not feel that they were valued or respected.

Within this institutional context, academics had to rely on their own workgroup relationships to provide them with the stability and security they required. As discussed in Chapter Three, 'workgroups within departments are the most significant aspect of social life for the individuals involved' (Trowler, 2008 p.20). There are recurrent patterns, practices and activities within these workgroups that connect the members who generally share common ground and see each other regularly. However, the data reveals that even at this meso-level (Trowler, 2008), academics found it difficult to operate comfortably within the workgroups that they had established with their colleagues prior to the merger. The shape and structure of departments changed in many different ways. Most departments merged with their counterparts from the 'other' institution, often with a great deal of difficulty and reluctance. Some departments had two heads of department (one from each former institution). Many senior members of departments took the option of accepting retrenchment packages and left the institution, leaving gaps and increasing the pressure on workloads. Existing workgroups therefore lost their members and some workgroups disintegrated leaving individuals feeling isolated and insecure: *I no longer belong to what was* (P8).

Many merged departments had conflicting workgroups with different assumptions and practices as well as different power relations. Within an institutional context with political in-fighting, uncertainty about job security, physical office relocations, and a changing student population, there was very little trust among staff: *'political allegiances, ML Sultan allegiances...there are no more TN [Technikon Natal] allegiances'* (P2). Without the familiarity of their workgroups, there is evidence in the

data that several participants felt disconnected and adopted a strategy of self-preservation to deal with the situation:

*I've been at Natal Technikon, that was...cos I'm told that it's very different now...it's very different...I must not actually consider myself as anything but a very new member of this institution (P8);*  
*it takes its toll on you...it takes its toll on your family...I've got a three year old boy and he needs all my attention...so you know its not...uh...what you call fulfilling in many respect (P1).*

Given the participants' view that the new institutional structure, including rules and regulations, had been imposed upon them with little or no consultation, their disgruntlement seems understandable. The notion that they would simply adapt to a new institution in which there were tensions around the different sets of assumptions and practices that had been drawn from the two separate institutions was unrealistic. Academics were now facing not only national policy shifts, the changing shape of the higher education sector, the institutional merger and its impact upon institutional life, but also a change in the status of their institution as it was decreed to be a university of technology. During the time of discussions between the Committee of Technikon Principals and the Minister of Education (CTP, 2003a) there were very particular reasons for promoting the change of institutions from technikons to UoTs, as discussed in Chapter Two. While some of these related to market perceptions of technikons, both nationally and internationally, there were other reasons given for advocating the change. However, as is shown by the data to follow, at the time of writing the academics were of the view that the DUT management had predominantly focussed on issues related to the revised nomenclature and the resultant marketing exercise to re-brand the institution.

This was to be yet another challenge for academics who were still dealing with the merger fall-out. As we have seen, the merger processes were fraught with power struggles, internal politics, and staff tensions and uncertainty, and had a profound effect on the institutions and individuals involved. In his analysis of institutional mergers, Garside claimed that 'not much "melding" appears to have happened...the chance to define a new hybrid intellectual culture and identify appears to have been

lost' (2005 p.13). What it *has* meant is that a great deal of institutional time, energy and resources were spent facilitating the transition. The result was that the institutional management had less capacity to engage meaningfully with the challenges of becoming a UoT in 2005.

Within DUT, the lack of institutional engagement around what working in a UoT would signify for curriculum, teaching, learning and research practices, meant that for some time<sup>36</sup> it was business as usual. Despite the institutional silence around the academic implications of the shift, there was a strong sense shown within the data which follows that in comparison with technikons, the participants were of the opinion that there were distinct differences in the quality, type and levels of learning within universities. Some of the participant perceptions about what it means to work in a UoT and the extent to which they experienced their UoT as different to a technikon are now explored in order to further draw attention to the ways in which the participants have discursively constructed the changes that confronted them and the of this on how they engage with curriculum.

The participants in this study were unanimous in their opinion that as a UoT there should be considerable changes within their institution. Participant One said:

*This is what is frustrating in terms of management in this place is that we're not moving forward...we have this fancy university name change and everything else but in terms of delivery I can't tell you 100% that I'm happy...(P1).*

Participant Eight clearly saw significant differences between the ways that universities and ex-technikons operate:

*if you're going to be a UoT you've got to put in an infrastructure, you've got to make sure you've got the supports, you've got to...and you've got to find a way to engage the students in a way that will motivate them to learn...we have no real student culture (P8).*

Rather than viewing the change as one that would not necessitate a substantial transformation of ex-technikons, as was suggested by the CTP (Committee of

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<sup>36</sup> This situation continued until 2006 when a new DVC:Academic was appointed, and when a new VC was appointed in 2007, and institutional conversations about the nature of universities of technology began.

Technikon Principals, 2003b), the data indicates that the institution would have benefited from having a clear vision of what the implications of this change would be. At the time, it seemed to the participants that there was more focus on marketing and re-branding of the institution, and very little focus on the academic implications of being a university.

Participant Seven was particularly critical of the quality of education offered at the technikon, expressing his view that technikon students were not encouraged to think critically and study independently. This participant had previously worked in a historically disadvantaged university and had this to say when asked whether or not there are significant differences in the academic standards between a UoT and an historically disadvantaged university where he had previously taught: *'Not that much, but there's a big difference between White universities and Black universities, that is clear'* (P7). He put it succinctly when he stated that a primary goal of a university and its students should be to *'challenge everything'* (P7).

In 2002 the CTP had described technikons as offering a 'career-focused, hands-on approach to education and training and the delivery of graduates with knowledge that is immediately relevant in the workplace' (CTP, 2002a p.7). Given both the technikons' focus and history (as described in Chapter Two), the shift away from being a technikon towards being a university (of technology) is fraught with challenges that will not easily be met. These challenges arise from the different roles that universities and technikons have traditionally served and include issues of staff expertise, level of learners, and stakeholder perceptions that are explored through the participant responses below. This perception was evident in the data as participants expressed a view, not so much that universities and UoTs serve different purposes within the sector, but rather that universities are 'better' than the ex-technikons:

*a university is higher...we should be higher obviously'* (P6);

*'universities are way ahead at the moment...basically the students come to us...they can't go to university...don't know what else to do so they think oh well the technikon'* (P2);

*I would say standard of students that we intake firstly should be higher...the quality should be better as well...to me it's just quantity it's not quality anymore, so to me the DUT is just a name change...that's all it is...same package, different name change...you can call it TN [Technikon Natal] and ML [ML Sultan Technikon] it will be the same thing...it's not going to make any difference...the students are still doing the same things (P6).*

The fact that these kinds of comparisons were being made, suggests that if indeed this particular UoT had clearly defined its vision and purposes, it had at the time of writing not sufficiently engaged with stakeholders, both internal and external, in ways that enabled those stakeholders to support the UoT's vision and purpose, and promote the growth of this UoT's particular niche. This need for more engagement with the whole issue and more clarity about the institutional expectations of academics was highlighted within the data:

*we need to like look at them [the differences between a technikon and a UoT], yes, these are the two situations and how do we upgrade from here to here, you know, not just talk about it (P5).*

Farmer claims that when faced with change, people require information in order to understand the proposed change, and they need time for investigation, questions, debate, reflection and application (1990). In a similar vein, Fullan's view is that it is *people* who change systems and systemic education reform only has a chance of succeeding 'when greater clarity and coherence are achieved in the minds of the majority of teachers...' (1996 p.421). Without a sound understanding of what it means to be a UoT, the name change of this particular institution inevitably led some staff members to unfavourably compare this UoT with what they believed to be the attributes of universities: *'standards are different, let me just put it that way, standards are different' (P7)*. What seemed clear is that without meaningful debate to understand and challenge what it means to work in a UoT, academic staff would continue to operate in ways with which they are familiar rather than to make the shifts required to produce and disseminate knowledge in ways that encourage critical and independent thinking, intellectual inquiry and technology transfer.



Linked to this, one of the risks for UoTs that was evident in the data was the temptation to look to established universities to guide their own institutional identities. As Participant Two stated forcefully:

*we're not a research university...forget it...250 of our students are studying doctorates...0.05% of our students...so let's get that straight...we are not a research university (P2).*

As discussed in Chapter Two, the Education Ministry has been aware of the tendency towards programme uniformity expressed in institutional plans. The policy framework and subsequent reshaping and resizing exercise were intended to create a single coordinated system comprising different types of institutions with a variety of programmes serving the diverse needs of our country. The intention was not to create a number of similar universities all striving to do the same things in the same ways. There is, therefore, increasing policy pressure on the ex-technikon sector to have fitness of purpose, that is, to fashion an identity best suited to the particular students they teach and the industry stakeholders with whom they have formed long-standing relationships. In his argument that UoTs should not aspire to become more like established universities and should acknowledge their purpose as UoTs, Participant Two stated that:

*our focus is undergraduate...we are an institution that's vocational...our training is basically aimed at preparing people for a specific career path (P2).*

The Ministry has gone some way towards trying to ensure that despite 'institutional aspirations' (DoE, 2001), the differentiations remain in place so that the student population traditionally served by the ex-technikons continues to benefit.

A significant challenge for UoTs that plan to drift towards a general academic focus with the intention of competing with established universities, is their lack of academic staff with high-level research qualifications. Several participants in this study were still studying towards their Masters degree. With over 90% of technikon students studying at under-graduate level, and post-graduate degree-awarding only beginning in 1995 (after the promulgation of the 1993 Technikons Act), there has not been a driving need to attract academic staff with Masters and Doctoral degrees. Until quite recently, it was seen to be more significant that academic staff at technikons should have workplace experience and expertise in their field of study. Participant Seven

who had worked both in a university and at a UoT firmly expressed his view on the differences between UoT and university academic staff:

*I think they're [historically-advantaged universities] a little bit more...they have more qualified people at the end of the day, it comes down to that, I think (P7).*

More recently we have seen significant shifts in DUT institutional policy, with strategic plans foregrounding the need to attract more academically qualified staff and to provide support for the upgrading of existing staff qualifications. This initiative is closely linked to the UoTs' drive to become more research-focussed. The data reflects the pressure these participants were feeling with regard to the increased research focus and how it might compromise the academic endeavour:

*you have your academic load, then you have your own research, then you have the students you have to supervise, then you have the students you must monitor in industry and time wise you find that if you had sufficient time for these things you would have done it well...(P4).*

Prior to 1993 technikons were not research institutions, and were 'never meant to be research institutions' (Ogude et al., 2001 p.10) which meant that staff could carry heavy teaching loads. With the changed context, including advancements in technology and the dire need for applied research outputs within South Africa, there has been growing pressure on technikons (and now on UoTs) to conduct applied research and develop post-graduate technology students. There have been 'expectations that the applied nature of technikon research will focus on "research in context" and produce results that can make a substantial difference to the economy and the material needs and conditions of people in the country' (Ogude et al., 2001 p.10). With UoTs increasingly moving towards offering post-graduate degrees, institutions are under pressure to ensure that academics are more highly qualified. Baletti and Whitehouse state that '[t]he Ph.D is the passport to the academy. It gives license to speak "authoritatively"' (2001 p.51), and enables full engagement with the knowledge of the discipline and the confidence to challenge and be challenged. In contrast, one participant referred specifically to the inadequately qualified staff at the institution:

*you look at your students, they look at their staff member and if those guys themselves are not heavy weights it becomes like a high school... (P7).*

Having discussed the participant reactions to the changed status of their institution, it is evident from the data that more than two years after the establishment of this UoT, there was still uncertainty about the implications of the changed institutional status for their work. The institution was still in post-merger flux, with tensions and confusion reflected in the evidence of the previous section. Now academics were faced with more changes that once again seemed to mean that their assumptions about teaching and learning would need to shift. However, at this early stage of the shift from technikon to UoT, there was very little institutional direction provided and no articulation of what the new nomenclature would mean for teaching and learning practice. The change discourses discussed here evidenced the resultant sense of confusion experienced by the study participants. Although the status of the institution changed in 2005, the institution did not articulate its vision or expectations until 2007, which meant that for a considerable amount of time business continued as usual and the merger fallout remained the focus of attention. To some degree this was evidenced by the participants' repeated references throughout this section to DUT as a technikon rather than a UoT, indicating to some degree that until they understood and accepted what the change meant for them, they would identify with what was familiar to them. What seems clear in the evidence above is the participants' view of the institution as ill-equipped to take on the challenges of becoming a UoT and their perceptions that such a shift should bring with it significant changes and the leadership and resources needed to implement these changes.

Henkel suggests that 'the traditional strength and stability of academic identities are strongly associated with membership of communities, primarily the discipline and the university, that together constitute a coherent, bounded world' (2004 p.167). She maintains that these identities are 'shaped and reinforced in and by strong and stable communities and the social processes generated within them' (2005 pp.156-7). What we have seen in the findings of this study thus far though, is that with the changes in higher education policy and the concomitant shifts that have occurred at an institutional level, including the merger and becoming a UoT, the study

participants felt alienated from the institution and were unable to define what it is that the institution expects from them. Moreover, these participants did not seem proud of their institution but were instead quite disparaging about the quality of work produced within it. It might be suggested that as a result of the continual changes and lack of stability within the institution, the tacit assumptions and established practices (Trowler, 2008) that formed an important part of the institutional culture were being challenged. What created more uncertainty and unhappiness among participants was that there was no guidance or certainty about the values and assumptions that would replace those that were apparently no longer relevant.

While the findings reflect that these participants were uncertain about what working in a merged institution that had become a UoT signified for their practice, and were unsure about what their roles and responsibilities were to be within such an institution, they nonetheless displayed varying responses and reactions to the challenges that these changes had imposed upon them. The more specific discussions around academic identity discourses that follow in the next chapter can only be appreciated against the backdrop of the discourses of change arising from the institutional context and culture discussed so far.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

The impact of the institutional merger and its ripple effect upon established practices and assumptions of what constituted 'normal' behaviour (Trowler, 2008 p.55) has not been the only factor that has impacted upon and challenged the academic identity of these participants. Their responses reveal that new ways of constructing reality are challenging existing values, assumptions and practices. The challenges to their established identities and ways of working are made increasingly difficult by the lack of a supportive and change-ready environment. We are reminded here of Scott, Coates and Anderson's study (discussed in Chapter Three) that describes the characteristics of a change-supportive institutional culture, and points to the importance of good academic leaders who hold assumptions and values aligned with those helpful to change, and can model, reinforce and encourage good practice (Scott et al., 2008 p.85).

Emerging from the data was a clear sense that, despite facing similar institutional and national challenges, participants were exhibiting different discursive constructions of change. These responses seemed to indicate that when faced with challenges and constraints of structural change, individuals adopt different positions or act differently. It raised the issue of agency and the notion that individual agency is important for structural changes to result in changed practice. The discourse of academic identity discussed in the next chapter will explore this matter and consider the extent to which these different levels of agency are influenced by factors within the working environment.

## **Chapter Six: Discourses of identity**

### **6.1 Introduction**

During a time of higher education reform, it stands to reason that policy, structural change and institutional uncertainty affect 'the working lives, values and identities of academics in higher education institutions' (Henkel, 2000 p.23). This chapter explores the extent to which the identities of these participants have been impacted by change, and the bearing that this has had on their curriculum engagement.

The second set of curriculum-related discourses identified in the data and discussed in this chapter are participants' discursive constructions of their academic identities. As argued in Chapter Three, academic identity construction impacts upon the ways that curriculum is constructed. The analysis considers what the participant responses reveal about the challenges of institutional shifts and the impact that these changes have had upon their academic identity. The purpose is to consider not only how these academics position themselves in the face of change (Harré & Moghaddam, 2003), but also to understand the factors that might account for these positions and what the implications are for curriculum transformation. Curriculum discourses arise at least in part from our personal history which influences our academic identity. As contended in Chapter Three, academic identity formation is strongly influenced by our context and experiences (Gee, 2000). While these contexts embrace all aspects of our histories, educational backgrounds and social milieu, and notwithstanding the part that prior experiences play in influencing the formation of an academic identity, research suggest that the influence of disciplinary knowledge and culture plays a more considerable role in this process (Gee, 2000). Thus, while this analysis does take into account factors such as backgrounds and experiences that have contributed towards the participant curriculum discourses, the focus is more upon the academic context. The analysis considers the role played by the institutional culture and the departmental and disciplinary environments within which the academics work in influencing their academic identity construction. The analysis also explores the extent to which the participants feel that the institutional culture is supportive of curriculum change initiatives and the degree to which this alignment, or lack of it, impacts on their individual agency in responding to curriculum change

## **6.2 Discourses of academic identity**

Evidence from the last chapter seems to support the notion that without a strong and stable institution-identity (Gee, 2000) which research suggests is one of the primary sources of an academic identity (Henkel, 2004; Becher & Trowler, 2001), these academics have had to look for other sources of identity that would provide them with the familiarity, security and affirmation that they needed. In her study, Henkel reflects on the importance of the institution for the lives of academics working within them. She states that with all the changes taking place in higher education and the more centralised and managerial approaches being adopted, 'the institution has more power to affect academic working lives but it may be a weaker source of identification' (Henkel, 2005 p.164). At such a time, when the assumptions, values and practices are in a state of flux and there is a lack of strong institutional and academic leadership, what the evidence seems to show is that there is a weakening of institution-identity, as the institution-identity within which many of these academics had formed and developed their academic identity no longer existed. The challenges that these changes presented for the participants' academic identity and sense of self-worth will be explored in this chapter.

In Chapter Three I discussed the notion of academic identity and the extent to which such identity empowers academics to engage with their curriculum in powerful, autonomous ways. However, where such identities are not claimed, academics may find themselves without the agency to address curriculum issues. In my analysis of the data I was able to identify a continuum of agency among the academics interviewed in this study, ranging from those who discursively construct themselves, or are constructed, by their circumstances as powerless through to those who discursively construct themselves with the power to impact the curriculum. It would be misleading to suggest that there are two discrete groupings of participants, clear cut and neatly ordered as either having agency or not. Rather the data revealed a continuum along which the participants placed themselves in terms of their responses to curriculum change. There is also evidence within the data to suggest that the continuum of responses is fluid and 'messy', with some participants who claim agency at times also displaying a tendency to see themselves as victims of the

system. By this I mean that they feel powerless to act and perceive that actions are being done *to* them rather than *by* them.

What was clear from the data was that some participants discursively constructed themselves as having more agency than others did. At a superficial level, one might be tempted to believe that some individuals are simply more motivated than others to embrace change, but there is also a great deal of evidence from the data showing that motivation alone does not tell the full story. There are many factors that come into play and this suggests that the responses of the participants in this study to change demands are complex and cannot be attributed to a single factor.

Without having explored to any great extent the cultural, social and educational histories of participants, this thesis does not intend to investigate reasons for the positions academics assume when faced with national and institutional pressure to undertake curriculum change. Instead it identifies and explores these academic identity positions, examining the underlying assumptions that inform the ways that the participants construct curriculum and what this means for curriculum transformation. The following section thus explores in more detail specific findings in the data that relate to participant agency. In the context of this study agency is interpreted as including a willingness to take initiative, a sense of control and ownership over processes, an assumption of personal responsibility for actions, and some accountability for the outcomes of those actions.

### **6.2.1 *Constructions of agency***

This section of the chapter provides a discussion on those participants who present a more agentic academic identity discourse in the data. It is worth pointing out again that this position was not always clear cut and later in this chapter I will explore some of the contradictions and vacillation evident in the participants' conversations. During the course of my conversations with those participants that displayed agency, in the case of certain participants there was evidence to suggest that their adoption of this agentic position was intentional (van Langenhove & Harré, 1999). They had clearly considered the change requirements, had weighed up how best to deal with the changes and had decided to take some positive action. Participant Five who led a



department that worked proactively and consistently to transform their curricula, taking responsibility for the change process despite the aforementioned challenges is an example of this:

*It's the programme that needs to know that we need to revise...I don't even think it should be the professional board or people like those necessarily...because that is where we are at now with our curriculum development process...I think that it needs to be the programme...DUT's programme that says this is what we will teach and how we will teach it, and this is what we want to change, if we want to go systems-based or if we want to go whatever, **we** need to say, not anybody else (P5).*

There were others whose mode of positioning seemed to be what van Langenhove and Harré (1999) would refer to as first order or tacit positioning, which happens when people do not consciously or intentionally locate or position themselves. I would describe these participants as having an awareness of the new curriculum change requirements, and quietly adapting their practice to meet them:

*there were some of us who were willing to go out and experiment with different ways of putting this whole curriculum together and looking at it from an outcomes-based point of view, like that's what we need out there so how are we going to get there, and what do we need to get there (P10).*

These participants seemed confident that the required changes would not be too onerous as they were accustomed to continually changing their curricula to meet the needs of students, industry and institutional requirements.

The agentic position manifested itself in the language of participants whose sense of empowerment and influence over curriculum processes and their ability to shape the nature and structure of their curricula was consistent throughout the conversation. These participants seemed comfortable to use their voices and consistently expressed confidence that their voices would be heard and heeded. Participant Ten expressed a certain confidence in her ability to make changes, taking into consideration industry requirements, learner needs and institutional policy:

*I like to think about what I'm doing and reflect on what I'm doing and make changes and if it doesn't work this way, next time we'll change it, and does it*

*benefit the student, is it in line with what's required, so I also like to see things being aligned [with policy] (P10).*

Another agentic participant similarly expressed confidence in his department's ability to effect change:

*...the fact that we've got success over and above everybody else in South Africa now...our throughput is moving...it's going up...is through our experiences in modularisation and because we're constantly challenging what we do... (P3).*

Further evidence of the curriculum agency assumed by some participants was manifest in their willingness to engage in curriculum issues. They all spoke enthusiastically about their disciplines and the changes they were making to their curricula:

*One of the things that was really, really useful was around the issue of land...the student had to look at a piece of land that was somehow related to their family and trace um you know the history of that piece of land...so that was quite exciting (P9).*

This agentic positioning did not necessarily mean that they supported some of the national and institutional changes or that they necessarily viewed them as being positive for the learners, the institution or industry. Their discourses of change, as discussed in the last chapter, were often ones of resistance. What it did mean is that they had reflected on these changes and were assured enough to express their opinions:

*If you want to improve you've got to move to another point, you've got to constantly, there's no room for complacency, there's no room for people to say right, now we've achieved that, now that's it...you cannot...that's not curriculum development, it's...it's a vibrant energetic system that keeps growing and growing (P3).*

Participant Two, a former Dean in the institution, took an uncompromising position with regard to the lack of curriculum change progress at DUT. He had a sound

grasp of the national requirements, and spoke passionately about the lack of institutional initiative:

*Silo...We're still in silos...silos in disciplines...it's absolute bullshit...that's the single biggest weakness I think and you know what...[traditional] universities are way ahead at the moment...they've left us standing for dead and we are picking up the scraps in terms of students... (P2).*

A common feature among the participants who constructed their identities as having agency, was their involvement in curriculum projects. All of them had been involved in institutional and departmental curriculum initiatives, and some had been invited to become involved as subject matter experts in national processes of qualification development. Without exception, these participants displayed a familiarity with the new system and used the terminology confidently. What emerges from the data is that the participants' involvement in curriculum initiatives definitely contributed towards their ease and confidence with the workings of the new system. For example, Participant Ten was actively involved in the national Standards Generating Body (SGB<sup>37</sup>) responsible for developing qualifications in her field and her opinion of the direction that her profession should take was clearly influenced by her SGB involvement: *'I think for the profession, to maintain the profession, you have to have some national standard, which they're trying to do through the SGB but then the institutions are also just kind of doing their own thing in the meantime. But at the end of the day we have to follow what the SGB comes up with' (P10).*

These more agentic participants thus engaged in institutional and national projects and positioned themselves at the centre of transformation initiatives within their industry and the institution. Their adoption of this position enabled them to make more sense of the system and they seemed to feel empowered to engage in change processes. Generally these participants were also those who appeared enthusiastic and motivated to push for change. This speaks to the importance of Trowler's

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<sup>37</sup> SGB – Standards Generating Bodies (SGBs) were established by SAQA to generate qualifications and unit standards and to recommend qualifications and unit standards to National Standards Bodies (NSBs); to update and review unit standards; and to recommend criteria for the registration of assessors, moderators and moderating bodies (SAQA,1997).

(2008) notion of workgroups in the construction of academic identity, as discussed in Chapter Three. The analysis above suggests that an individual who becomes a member of a workgroup (which in the case of Participant Ten was an SGB), can be influenced by the values and assumptions of that group and can similarly influence the workgroup over time. Having become a member of this workgroup, the participant clearly saw some value in belonging to the group and took on ownership of change initiatives, bringing his confidence and improved capacity back into the institution.

Despite their frustration with some of the institutional processes, these more agentic participants expressed confidence in their own roles as curriculum developers and were very clear that they felt their primary role was as an educator. While they indicated that there have been changes in the quality of students accepted into their programmes, they spoke animatedly about their roles as teachers and their commitment to improving the quality of their programmes in order to serve the students that they teach:

*we often looked at our students and why they are not passing and we would say that you know...uh...we have to realise that those students that we've selected are the best students that are there and if they're your best and that's what you've got to work with, then why isn't it being translated into success?* (P3);

*it's [the curriculum] also informed by...I mean we have a lot of contact with outside um you know with the city and with the province, and with private practitioners, with other academics...* (P9).

These participants also seemed more motivated and confident in their ability to understand industry needs, interpret them and develop curricula that could marry the demands of their professions with the requirements of the institutions to benefit the learners and advance the industry:

*I will not only be looking at it [the curriculum] from an educational perspective, from within a higher education institution, I have to look at it from a profession specific point of view* (P3).

What the data showed was that those participants who felt that they had a good grasp of the working of the system, its demands and what it meant for their work, also seemed to exhibit more confidence in their ability to play an active role in curriculum change processes, thus constructing themselves as having more individual agency. They seemed to take on the national curriculum discourses more readily than those who remained outside of such initiatives. Their language revealed that through their investment in the new higher education system processes, they felt empowered to take on the discourses and to express their confidence in effecting curriculum change:

*we want to achieve a learning programme or a curriculum that's going to be conducive to achieving the outcomes of what we require in our pro...in our profession...so therefore and you we need now to revise the way we do things...start to think outside the box ... now for those in health you'll have to liaise with professional bodies so you bring in the strategic role players...and you have SGBs for whatever level they are functioning at now...bring that in and understand that...so that you have someone actually driving the process and saying these are the steps to curriculum development, okay, and this is the sort of paperwork and administration that is required through this process (P3).*

Another manifestation of curriculum agency is seen in the relationships of these individuals and/or their departments with industry. In contrast with less agentic individuals, these participants recounted specific interventions and activities that they had undertaken in collaboration with their industry or profession, and were knowledgeable about trends and developments within their industry:

*I also serve on the Professional Board for [profession] practitioners and then I also serve on the overarching body which is the Health Professions Council, and part of our duty as the [Health Professions Council] HPC is the ETQA<sup>38</sup> [Education and Training Quality Assurance body] for health and our*

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<sup>38</sup> Education and Training Quality Assurance (ETQAs) bodies were established under SAQA to accredit providers, to be responsible for quality assurance and to monitor and audit the achievement of standards and qualifications (DoE, 1998).

*professional board is the SGB for our profession...and I'm the chair of the education committee of the professional board so I think you can understand that I will not only be looking at it from an educational perspective, from within a higher education institution, I have to look at it from a profession specific point of view (P3).*

There was an acknowledgement of the role that industry should play in the development and review of their career-focused programmes, with some participants revealing that they are happy to take their curriculum cues from industry, and to encourage industry role-players to take a very active role in the curriculum processes:

*we did have an advisory board, we're hoping to set one up um starting next year, um again, to revive it, it was quite useful and I think it's necessary um because I mean industry never...they don't you know...they don't mince their words when they say what it is that they want from the students' (P9).*

Participant Nine also spoke about collaborative curriculum projects that her department participates in:

*we have a fairly good relationship with the city [officials] and they do get involved in projects whereby they involve our students and things like that so in a sense that's quite good (P9);*

*I look at other people's curriculums you know around the world, internationally, what are they teaching their students, which are the areas they're focussing on, what is new, what are the new buzz words that kind of thing (P9).*

Some of these participants were suffering similar frustrations with their profession or industry that the less agentic participants were, however, the difference seemed to be in their responses to these challenges. Rather than being passive and allowing problems to obstruct their curriculum processes, they remained engaged and tried to resolve the issues while continuing with curriculum development initiatives.

Participant Five was the head of a department that was respected both institutionally and nationally for its teamwork and interest in curriculum development. Their

students performed exceptionally well in the professional board examinations and were highly employable graduates. This participant explained at great length the hurdles facing her department as they struggle to implement curriculum change within a profession that has assumed the role of standardising the curricula of all higher education institutions offering qualifications in the field. Her issue was that not all institutions were being held to the same standard:

*if you say you're standardising and you're not doing that, you know...so those are the issues...generally the idea of having a professional board and...and you know they are...they are watchdogs, if you want, for the curriculum and everything else, to me that is fine, but it needs to be done, you know, properly (P3).*

Despite these concerns, this participant was proactive in leading her department towards the development of significantly modified curricula that would prepare the learners for changing workplace demands.

Perhaps one of the most defining features of the more agentic participants' conversations was the choice that they had made to engage, to be proactive, to find ways to circumvent obstacles and deal with the challenges they faced. Although they too were faced with the bureaucracy and paperwork that has accompanied the introduction of the new curriculum requirements, they did not seem paralysed by the demands being placed upon them and were pragmatic about the need to adapt and find ways to operate despite the challenges facing them. Despite expressing their frustrations, they did not perceive themselves to be victims or to be powerless over their ability to make improvements or to adapt to difficult circumstances. In cases when these participants felt that their professions were uninformed about national higher education developments or were not taking the initiative in ensuring that the profession was adhering to new policy requirements, they displayed the will and confidence to guide the profession:

*the previous professional board didn't do anything about it and didn't understand the issue of SAQA Act and the...all...all those issues...the NQF and stuff like that, so when we got in as a professional board, we said right why is this not being worked on, why is this not being developed, these are*

*things that we now need to do so at the moment we're dodging bullets and knives (P3).*

When Participant Ten was asked about whether or not she felt that her department had any control over the curriculum, her response was:

*Mm, yes, we [the department] definitely do, because it's one of the professions where, and I've seen this with other people where they looked to the profession for guidance, we actually...maybe we shouldn't...but we tell the profession what they're going to do (P10).*

What became evident in the analysis of the data is that the more agentic participants were inclined to draw attention to learner issues more frequently than those who took a more passive or resistant stance to change initiatives. An aspect of their language that enabled me to identify those participants who were disposed to change, was in their descriptions of their learners. Muller argues that in order to undertake curriculum transformation, academics need to reconsider who their learners are, and to have an understanding of what it means to be a citizen in South Africa (Muller, 1997). It makes sense that an appreciation of their learner profile, including the learners' backgrounds, cultures and languages, would serve to influence academics' attitudes to curriculum transformation. This was in contrast to the less agentic participants who seldom, if ever, mentioned the learners except in negative ways. The participants who constructed themselves in more agentic ways expressed some concern and a certain amount of empathy for learners, and also seemed more conscious of some of the challenges facing them. Participant Two was conscious of the need for academics to adapt their curriculum and teaching practices to meet the needs of students:

*they need to develop new strategies and deal with a new kind of student profile and that's meant a lot of the time building in more foundational elements in the first year which we didn't do before (P2).*

Referring to the quality of learners at the institution, one participant had this to say:

*Yes, students are my passion. I think that we need to have a relationship with them and it's, I think it's hard but I think maybe it's something that you get with experience as a lecturer (P10);*

*I really believe that you can push the student and then you let them go and when they get there, you push them a bit more so, I believe because I've seen*



*it in the past, I've done it years back where you push them almost to beyond their limits, and then they stretch their boundaries (P10).*

This discussion of academic identity construction demonstrates the more agentic position assumed by some participants who expressed their willingness to navigate their way around the system and to try and find ways to comply with curriculum change requirements. There was some evidence to suggest that this sense of ownership and personal responsibility for their actions is in some ways connected to their position within the institution. With one exception, the more agentic participants had either previously been, or were at the time of our conversations, heads of their own departments. This was in contrast to the less agentic participants who, with one exception, were not departmental heads and were generally not involved in faculty and institutional decision-making bodies. This finding raises some significant issues around the role played by participants' institutional and workgroup identities and their influence upon the willingness and capacity of the respondents to engage in curriculum change processes. These issues will be discussed further in this chapter. Before this, the discussion will focus on those participants who used less agentic discourses, bearing in mind that although these findings are presented in two distinct groupings, i.e. more agentic and less agentic, there was in fact a continuum of responses which have been grouped in this way for ease of access.

The most significant differences between participants who positioned themselves as more agentic and those who were less agentic is seen in their responses to change and their positioning of themselves in relation to the challenges they face in transforming their curricula. One of the most prominent discourses apparent in the conversations of those participants I would describe as less agentic was a sense of powerlessness against national, institutional, departmental and disciplinary issues that they perceived to be preventing their progress towards curriculum change.

I had expected to encounter an overt resistance to the demand for curriculum change from some participants, an argument against the dominant discourses of change, but I found this reaction to be absent in their responses. In my own academic development work with academics, I had experienced much of what I

would have termed to be resistance. This was often manifested in the form of what Peseta and Manathunga call strategies of 'refusal and sabotage' such as non-attendance at academic development workshops; critiquing the value of academic development; resisting the merit and use of new teaching approaches; undermining sessions by arguing minor issues continually; derailing progress by focusing on student deficiency, managerial incompetence and lack of resources; and deriding academic developers by undermining their competence (Peseta and Manathunga, 2007 p.169). Despite evidence of these strategies, here was, however, no evidence in the data that the participants actively resisted the notion of or necessity for curriculum change. On the contrary, there was acknowledgement by all participants in this study that there was room for curriculum transformation, and many of the participants, even those who had spoken most negatively about the implementation of OBE, and the frustrations and confusion they felt as a result of the new system and its implications for their practice, detailed curriculum problems and issues and recognised that change was necessary:

*when I've been through [curriculum] reviews and so on...and I'm glad I've done that because I now know at first year level what skills a photographer or a photographic business is looking for...what competencies...also in terms of content (P1).*

However, while there was an absence of active opposition to change among those participants whom I would describe as being less agentic, their resistance strategies manifested themselves in more passive ways that are described below.

One of the defining features of those who discursively constructed their academic identity in terms of a less agentic position was that they tended to blame external factors for their lack of participation in curriculum change interventions, and to view the challenges as insurmountable. One of these participants worked in a department that had been threatened with closure following a viability audit that identified a lack of well-qualified staff members, weak programme offerings and poor student success rates. This participant spent much of our conversation describing the circumstances in which he worked, including issues of academic staffing and heavy workloads within his department:

*we're horribly short-staffed...we were seven staff members in 2003 now we're down to four (P1);*

*Heavy teaching time...I mean twenty eight periods a week that's like...been like that from 1996 when I started lecturing so nothing's changed in ten years you know and...the demands in terms of administrative work is getting more and more and more' and 'work is getting hectic you...you know sit and you draw policies and you draw programme review things and...and curriculum development and it just never, never stops... (P1);*

*we don't have the time to do other academic functions in the department and that's why research in my department is zero because there is just no time (P1).*

There were others too, who focussed on institutional issues to explain the lack of curriculum development progress taking place within their departments. These included staffing issues and a heavy workload which were mentioned as significant deterrents to progress in curriculum change:

*we have a lot of part-time staff, they have no time to come in and do recurriculation...the institution doesn't pay much for part-time lecturers so sometimes it's a little bit difficult and there needs to be some kind of financial incentive to take them out for a day or two and invite them to a workshop (P11);*

*In my department it's becoming increasingly difficult to do the kind of supports that I want to do because they've added and added to my load, and the load has become...it's worse because we're not sharing any longer and people are away...you go to our dept you won't see staff (P8).*

Another common thread in the conversations of participants who constructed themselves as having little agency was a focus on the complexity of the national system, including the terminology, newly created structures and approaches, and their lack of certainty about how they were expected to comply. Unlike the more agentic participants who did not seem to feel totally restricted despite their frustrations with the delays in the finalisation of the new framework for higher

education<sup>39</sup>, the less agentic participants were inclined to be overwhelmed by the changes and the demands being made on them to change their curricula. In Participant Eleven's conversation, there were several references to the confusion caused by all the changes taking place:

*[that's] why is there nothing happening...no quick moves...too many changes in the system...from an 8 level NQF to a 10 Level...there's too many things happening at the same time' and 'morale is much lower than the younger staff that are coming in to the institution...they are there and they are looking forward and brighter...so for the older staff it's much more complicated and you can't cope and sometimes you go down with it (P11).*

It was not that the more agentic participants did not express similar sentiments or that these opinions were without justification. On the contrary, my own experience at the institution corresponds entirely with the views of all participants regarding the anxiety, confusion and discomfort resulting from the way the merger was managed. The data indicates however that less agentic participants were more inclined to focus on the negatives as factors that immobilised them and prevented their progress. In some respects these participants seem to be locked into a view of themselves as victims.

There were however, some exceptions. One participant whom I have included among the less agentic participants, had been at the institution for nineteen years, formerly as a staff member and departmental head at Technikon Natal. She had previously been at the forefront of some interesting and successful curriculum initiatives at Technikon Natal, and was a very engaged faculty member:

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<sup>39</sup> There was a review of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) that resulted in a significant change from an 8 level framework to a 10 level framework with more defined pathways for vocational and academic stream of higher education study. This resulted in a hiatus during which there was great institutional uncertainty about the levels of qualifications, and there was a lack of concrete information regarding the shape of the new framework, its implications for institutions, and timeframes for the implementation of the new framework. The delay in publishing the new framework impacted on institutions; there was a reluctance to register qualifications on the old framework and an inability to provide more direction to academics about how to proceed with the design of new qualifications and the review of existing qualifications. This resulted in a period of time during which there was great institutional uncertainty about the levels of qualifications, and limited curriculum development progress.

*we constantly reflected on our practice, on how we were doing, um where we needed to improve, and that happened all the time, and it was very exciting and it was also incredibly collegial and we all respected each other (P8).*

This participant made several references to the cohesion that had existed within her department prior to the merger, to the close relationships among the members of that department and to their shared vision and ownership of change initiatives that they had implemented.

Her experience within the merged institution had caused her great distress and she found the situation within her department to be untenable:

*and...and now we're divided in terms of just the structure of our department um and that's been...that's been...that's very problematic, it was for me, I mean when we first moved, I said this is...you've moved us so that you've literally got...races are segregated,...I really think that it's going to be a problem (P8).*

When referring to curriculum initiatives and innovations, she expressed her frustration and sadness at their lack of value within the merged department and her perceived inability to have any control over the direction being taken:

*I did take it back to the department and that was like dumped...it was irrelevant and what happened was after the...after the institutional strategic planning meeting we were informed that this is the new vision because it's allied to the faculty vision so we...[shrug of shoulders] (P8).*

She felt frustrated by the direction being taken to manage curricula, stating:

*So now the big change is now we have programme coordinators but the only thing about programme coordinators they have lots of responsibility for the admin, there's no notion that there's actually a theoretical foundation underpinning the teaching (P8).*

In her case, any attempts to be agentic and to implement previously successful curriculum initiatives had failed. She felt that all suggestions for curriculum change were being ignored and was distressed by what she believed to be a deterioration in the quality of the learning programmes her department was offering:

*Now we have lots of systems, check books, if a student comes in...we must sign to say that they've been in to see us, because we're giving remedial teaching if it all looks right, then it is right, the fact that our failure rate has increased over the last two years is not taken into account, the fact that we've had more students who have...who have left in the last two years has not been seen as problematic (P8).*

She therefore reported that she had adopted a more passive position as a matter of last resort and in order to survive within an environment that she found distressing: *so I literally disengaged...* (P8).

She thus moved from an academic identity constructed on the notion of having agency to that of having little agency.

Another participant responded to a question about the influence of institutional academic policies upon her academic work, as follows:

*I don't read it, not because I don't want to read it or because it's boring, personally I don't think that there's time' and 'I don't think anyone in our whole department here read any of the policies...the only one that I've read, I'll tell you uh this year is the Promotions Policy [laugh] (P6).*

This participant explained that she focused on teaching her particular subjects and did not concern herself with national or institutional issues: *'I'm only working in [her subject]...I don't know basically what they're doing in the other subjects'* (P6). She relied completely on her departmental head to inform her of any policy or procedural changes and to guide the department in the implementation of change. This is evident in the following extracts taken from our conversation:

*[name of HoD] knows because he's part of this industry thing, and he was saying as well that most of the stuff that we had in Acc 1 and 2 and 3 in those days it's phased out (P6);*

*[name of HoD]...he's part of the Professional Board as well (P6);*

*[name of HoD] was saying that they complained about nitty gritty stuff, about our guides...(P6);*

*[name of HoD] was saying let's try and change the structure, don't have tests, let's give them assignments (P6).*

The same participant's lack of agency manifested itself in her comments about curriculum issues within her department. This participant tended to deflect all questions about curriculum issues by suggesting that the concerns which were raised were not really important and that she was satisfied with the curriculum status quo, despite the description she gave of programme challenges within her department which seemed to suggest that there was in fact room for significant curriculum improvement. When discussing the programme relevance, she stated:

*to find that balance is so hard, I'll tell you why because we always say fine we going to be doing the balance sheet for example, but they don't have that link to the outside, there's no link, there's no basically like subject where they get to have an Accounting package where they get to spend the whole year with it (P6).*

She expressed some resentment of the national and institutional focus on student success rates. Her response to the low rate of student success within programmes offered by her department, was:

*When you hear people complaining, it's throughput rate...every semester ...this throughput thing...I think personally speaking [throughput rates] should be taken out...what is it telling you? I'm giving you a diploma...for what? I'm like selling it to you basically...it's becoming like a sausage factory...forgive me for using the words...it's becoming like that' (P6).*

An exploration of what she understood by these concepts and what they meant for her department's offerings revealed interpretations that displayed a lack of familiarity with national and institutional policies and guidelines. The following question was designed to probe the participant's inclusion of outcomes and assessment criteria within her course learner guides:

*With your learner guide, if you've got to put in their outcomes and assessment criteria do you think it makes any difference to anybody? (P6).*

Her response clearly showed that she mistakenly believed assessment criteria were intended to prescribe and specify assessment methods:

*From a lecturing perspective uh you know what I'll be very worried to put it in firstly, I wouldn't want to put it in there because to me that form of assessments...of assignments does not work, so I wouldn't want to put it in there (P6).*

Participant Seven, on contract at DUT, used his status as a foreign national and a contracted academic to distance himself from institutional issues and staff tensions:

*it gives me the impression that maybe some of the people that have been here for a long time, maybe they still have their own issues that they're trying to settle, but me I'm out of politics, really, totally (P7).*

He expressed his surprise at the lack of lecturer autonomy within the institution, and compared his experience overseas where he had taught at a university:

*in France the lecturer has a serious autonomy into what he teaches...and also in terms of issues of the curriculum, it's not written in black and white that you should teach this, you're a lecturer, you're qualified, they give you a title, and it's up to you to make it a point that you teach what you think is relevant to the student (P7).*

This participant viewed himself as an outsider and seemed detached from initiatives taking place in his department:

*there is a booklet always where they say uh this is the curriculum, or a subject file where the previous lecturer will give a few number of lines, but I haven't contributed (P7).*

Despite expressing frustrations with the system and acknowledging curriculum weaknesses, these participants who constructed themselves as having little agency were unable or unwilling to assume the authority and power to take control of their own programme development. They tended to look outside of themselves and their own learning programmes, focussing largely on contextual factors to explain the lack of curriculum development progress. Their responses were thus characterised by passivity or paralysis '*I think we are waiting...waiting to see*' (P11).

A characteristic shared by most of the less agentic participants was a tendency to express their impatience with the learners and their frustration with the quality of learners in their classes. These participants were largely silent on learner issues except to point out how weak learners were and how the academic calibre of students in their classes had deteriorated. There was little interrogation of reasons for this or for ways in which they could address these perceived weaknesses by changing aspects of what they do. In the case of Participant Six, she did not at any stage in the conversation suggest that the low rate of student success within her



programme might be attributable to curriculum matters. Instead she focussed entirely on student deficiencies and laid the blame for any problems squarely on the shoulders of the students:

*I find that the students are just lazy, you got the lazy ones, they refuse to do the homework, they bunk their lectures if they want to bunk, they don't care, then you have those who want to attend the lectures (P6);*

*I would say the problems with bottlenecks there would be...yet again I would think...students...they don't want to study, they find excuses, they won't write the exams, they won't write the supplementary, they don't write the supplementary, we are so generous here we set a special supplementary, they don't write the special supplementary, we set another one (P6);*

*...but you try to help all, obviously, but it's the weakest students who just have that 'don't care' attitude...it's not the best thing to say but it's like "if I fail, I fail"...it's nothing (P6).*

There also seemed to be an insensitivity to the financial challenges facing students, many of whom come from extremely poor backgrounds and rely on financial aid for their living costs and institutional fees:

*I mean I have students who are reluctant to even buy textbooks...the cheapest book we looked for as well, into their fees, you know, they paying R2000, make them pay R2300 in terms of this place it's a big problem by doing that, so the textbook was a problem for me...the students refused to buy some of them and then they copy them (P6).*

There was a sense that the learners' struggles with language and literacy was someone else's problem and that they should be sent off to classes that would 'fix' them. The academics did not appear to take ownership of developing literacy practices within their teaching or did not understand that the literacy practices of their discipline were integral to the knowledge construction processes of their discipline (McKenna, 2004):

*I also feel that our learners need to be a bit more committed in terms of going to English literacy classes...they need to write about [name of subject] and discuss and analyse and debate (P1).*

While it is clear that ‘the low English proficiency level of some students should not be underestimated and clearly has a major bearing on students’ success or failure’ (McKenna, 2004 p.153), the view that this is the cause of students’ problems with higher education studies, rests upon an assumption that students already understand ‘what meanings are appropriate to the academy and know how to construct them but simply lack the skills in the communication tool (language) used to transmit such meanings’ (McKenna, 2004 p.156). It is clear, however, that academics ‘are often unaware of the extent to which academic literacy is specific to the academy and that it comprises fairly significant differences across disciplines’ (Bharuthram & McKenna, 2006 p.497). The understanding of language as a neutral communication tool that is not connected to discipline specific meaning making places the responsibility for ‘fixing’ the problem somewhere else. In this case, when asked how language issues were dealt with by her department, one participant stated: *‘Well, but we actually haven’t done much I would say to address it’* (P6) and went on to lay the blame for student language ‘deficiency’ on the schooling system:

*when you come to DUT to register as a first year student, English has to be there, I think you can have a D on standard and E on higher<sup>40</sup> or something like that...you’ve got to have English...but the accuracy to me it’s not... (P6).*

Taking the position that students are intrinsically unmotivated, lazy and deficient serves to remove the academic’s own agency. However, this description of the lack of agency evident in some participants’ conversations is not meant to accuse these participants of deliberately trying to avoid responsibility for curriculum transformation. As McKenna (2004) points out, unless attention is drawn to the injustice of dominant discourses acquired through our life experiences, we are unlikely to question and contest their common sense status. She goes on to explain that ‘even where lecturers are aware that being able to take on the type of reading, writing and other behaviours expected by the academy involves more than technical language

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<sup>40</sup> These are matriculation symbols indicating the mark range that learners have achieved in each subject, eg., A = 80-100%, B = 70-79%, C = 60-69%, D = 50-59%, E = 40-49%. Before 2009, learners were able to study their matriculation subjects on Higher Grade (advanced level) or Standard Grade (ordinary level).

proficiency, they may not feel capable of assisting their students in acquiring these norms' (McKenna, 2004 p.168).

The process of deciding which participants were agentic was made more complex by the vacillation in this regard conveyed in some of the participants' comments. Although it initially seemed that academics' discursive constructions of their identities reflected their agency or lack thereof in very clear cut and unambiguous ways, it became evident through further analysis that there was fluidity in their responses. For this reason, the discussion moves on to explore more fully issues of inconsistent agency evident in the participant responses.

In some cases, the participants' assertions of their own agency were not consistently evident and nor were they supported by the rest of their conversations. Becher and Trowler remind us that change responses are usually not 'monochromatic', and can include 'a variety of reactions from different groups of staff, and even from the same group of individuals and groups at different times' (2001 p.16).

An example of inconsistent agency is seen in Participant Eleven's conversation, where she states at one point:

*I think we have a certain power in terms of rearticulation. We do have control because we are directly liaising with industry and we are also looking at other academic environments...I have to consult with industry, other academics etc (P11).*

At other points in the conversation, though, her comments contradict this sense of having curriculum control and taking initiative to ensure that the curriculum is relevant:

*I think we are waiting...waiting to see... and ...so the rearticulation process has been stopped due to institutional issues... (P11).*

When asked what those institutional issues were, she responded:

*I'm not sure...we seem to be waiting to see which direction to take and we just stopped there for a while...(P11).*

Thus, despite her one comment about departmental and individual agency, the entire tone of the conversation suggested a lack of agency and a view that there was an

external authority responsible for initiating change. It is for this reason that it felt appropriate to describe this participant as less agentic.

Another example of inconsistency in agentic positioning was Participant One. He made comments which seemed to be underpinned by a need to illustrate his competence. It was this self-awareness and conscious location of his academic identity as knowledgeable and proactive that demonstrates his intentional or deliberate self-positioning (Van Langenhove & Harré, 1999). In this regard I became very aware of the number of times this participant used the pronoun 'I' rather than 'we', revealing what I felt was an exaggerated need to draw attention to his expertise. Some examples are as follows:

*I've engaged parties and I can see where the focuses are (P1);*

*I also have to go and consult with photographers and when I was setting up Advisory Board that was my best opportunity. I had to consult with the photographers out there (P1).*

He also made sweeping statements filled with the terminology that pervades our education system as though to demonstrate his proficiency in such thinking:

*I can understand where SAQA are coming from also in terms of curriculum and everything else (P1);*

*Outcomes and issues of the learner and I think that's where people need to start looking at this whole thing first... (P1);*

*I believe CCFOs<sup>41</sup> should run across the entire curriculum...they should not be compartmentalised (P1).*

However, holistic analysis of the interview raises questions about the authenticity of this agentic voice. In the interview whenever probing questions required more detailed and specific responses the confidence in discussing national processes was not matched with any deep understanding thereof. For example:

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<sup>41</sup> CCFOs are critical cross-field outcomes that cross all bands, levels and fields of learning and must be embedded within all qualifications. They are broad outcomes intended to ensure that learners acquire generic competences that can be applied across a wide range of situations, rather than narrow skills applied within a limited context.

*with critical cross-field outcomes is that...we are doing something in theory and we are also now doing the very same thing in practical and we assessing each compartment separately (P1).*

At one point this participant stated confidently that:

*if I market the photography department in Europe, I'll get Bulgarians, I'll get Czechoslovakians, I'll get pommies...why? We have the best facilities and our prices are absolutely ridiculous for someone to come and study here (P1).*

However, at another point in the conversation, he contradicted this statement:

*Also in terms of capacity...space capacity...we went from a 1200 sq metre building...a first world facility...to a third world facility...I mean that was a workshop. The electrical supply isn't up to standard...every two months our flash packs are sitting in Jo'burg for repairs. The building leaks. The boundary wall of Curries Fountain is our darkroom wall. Every time it rains the place gets flooded, the ceilings have collapsed in the darkroom and one of the studios and...and we've got a severe shortage of space (P1).*

There was thus a tendency for some participants to describe themselves as powerful and influential within the curriculum context, while consistently using language that contradicted this positioning. There was some evidence of passivity or avoidance, as they pointed to external factors that prevented them from effecting change, and thus deflected the focus from their own ability to manifest change.

In my earlier discussion on the impact that the institutional merger and the subsequent institutional culture had on the morale of participants, the findings showed that all participants without exception had been negatively impacted, either physically or emotionally or both. Despite the necessity of the merger for disbanding the apartheid divisions between institutions, the data shows that its inept management led to a largely negative and damaging environment. Within this setting we find that there are some who seem more willing and able than others to engage with curriculum processes and to assume responsibility and ownership for the decisions and actions that they believed would and should influence and shape their curriculum. While innate capabilities and inherent motivation might indeed contribute to the different levels of agency displayed by these individuals, the evidence in the

data suggests that there were contextual factors which played an important role in individual agency.

The most significant among these factors were the workgroups to which these individuals belonged. As Trowler (2008) suggests, there are multiple workgroups to which an academic might belong. These are most often situated within the institution and are likely to be workgroups within departments but there are other workgroups like professional boards, national working teams, disciplinary networking groups etc., with whose values and practices an individual might identify. Gee's (2000) different ways of viewing identity includes affinity-identity which can be described as an allegiance to and participation in a set of shared practices and experiences that bind a group.

While it is not my intention to try to identify or discuss all of the different workgroups that play a role in the working lives of these individuals, the data did provide evidence that some workgroups play a more significant role than others in influencing curriculum discourse. Those that I identified through the data as providing an explanation for the different levels of curriculum engagement are professional and departmental workgroups. In the section that follows I will explore in more detail what the findings uncover about the professional-identity of these academics and uncover the value and stability that they experience within these 'affinity-groups' (Gee, 2000 p.105).

### ***6.2.2 Professional workgroup identity***

As a starting point it is worth reminding ourselves that the academics in UoTs are largely drawn into institutions from industry and commerce. Winberg suggests that the profile of UoT academics has changed in recent years with the employment of more 'university trained' people (2005 p.193), and this is reflected in the educational and professional experience of the participants in this study. While some of the participants had indeed been employed in industry prior to their appointments at the institution, there were others who were university trained and had very limited or no industry experience. In terms of the findings, though, all of the participants no matter

what their industry experience expressed a strong affinity with their professions and the field for which they were preparing learners.

As discussed in Chapter Two, technikons have several defining features, one of which Kraak describes as 'its production of skilled personnel to meet the intermediate skill needs of the national economy' (2006 p.135). The main purpose of technikons always lay in their strong ties with industry and their inclusion of workplace experience within their programmes, with the intention of producing work-ready graduates. The relationship between industry and the technikons had been, and still is, a source of pride and a major aspect of institutional identity and curriculum formation.

There was evidence in participant responses of identity tension felt as they experienced themselves as being pulled in different directions. They expressed themselves in ways that suggested they felt caught in the middle of having to comply with national and institutional policies that were not necessarily aligned with industry needs:

*I would say in our case mostly we definitely try to look at the industry orientation side...also not trying to lose the focus of our institution in terms of what they need as well...and then when we do recurriculation we have the industry people also sometimes looking at our work and also trying to look at their needs as well, and also checking that there are no gaps...but we can't meet all of them definitely (P11);*

*whatever roles you must play, I always got to think about my other role as a photographer as well. I must not be guided purely by academia. I also need to be guided by my role as a photographer (P1).*

Referring to the current national and institutional focus on throughput, also known as the rate of student success, and his attempts to improve student success while maintaining professional standards, Participant Three had this to say:

*close to 50% of the students fail in our first year cohort...and straight away that's at odds with national imperatives so I kept asking myself where is it that they've failed and what strategies can we put in place...because you've still*

*got to meet the requirements of the profession...you still can't lower the standards because in our profession its people's lives we're talking about...it's skill...it's a scope...that's our practice and it's a registrable qualification and you can't now just pass people because numbers dictate...you're being dictated to by numbers but you also make sure the individuals are competent... (P3).*

When asked how they balance what is needed by the professional board of their industry with what is needed academically, Participant Five sums up the views of those participants offering professional qualifications when she says:

*It would work better if maybe both entities, as in the academic institutions and the professional board, or whoever they assign to the role, work together (P5).*

This view was supported by Participant Ten who expressed her frustration with the different demands and requirements, and what she perceived to be a lack of cohesion:

*At the moment there seem to be two processes going on and we're all confused about it, because institutions are doing their things locally...and then at the same time there's this SGB which represents all the universities and universities of technology, are getting together and putting together a qualification, so we're getting kind of confused as to who waits for who and who dictates to who (P10).*

What these participants seemed to be experiencing was a dissonance between one particular set of industry-aligned practices that they valued and with which they were familiar, and another newer set of institution-related practices which were not really clear and which seemed contradictory to those practices in which they were already invested. This resonates with Trowler's view that workgroups have assumptions and values that can influence their members and can result in the development and normalisation of patterns of behaviour (Trowler, 2008).

It was apparent that the participants valued their own identity as professionals and although they were all quick to state that their primary role was to educate, it was clear that they also discursively constructed themselves in terms of their own



industry experience and networks. They all valued the role that their particular industry or profession played in reviewing their programmes, serving on departmental advisory boards or liaison committees, keeping academic staff abreast of industry trends and providing input into the development of curricula. This is reflected in Participant Three's comment:

*you've still got to meet the requirements of the profession...you still can't lower the standards because in our profession it's people's lives we're talking about (P3).*

In terms of the agency debate though, the data showed that some participants, particularly those involved in national curriculum processes through national Standards Generating Bodies (SGBs) and in leading curriculum initiatives for the national technikon movement, seemed more willing or able to own and take control of their curriculum processes. They found the influence of industry to be too restrictive and prescriptive, leading to tensions and frustration. Participant Five had this to say about the dominant role that the professional board played in her department's curriculum development processes:

*they [the professional board] to me they are inhibitory to the process because to me if probably they would have trusted...you could call it, you know...if they trusted [the institution] to run with the curriculum we would be fine...(P5).*

The more agentic participants explained their frustration caused by the tension between their own views of the direction the curriculum should take and the constraints placed upon them by their professional boards:

*the [National Health Department] registrar believes he controls all these programmes and he's not interested in DoE [Department of Education], that's...you know that's the thinking there... (P3);*

*Generally the idea of having a professional board and...and you know they are...they are watchdogs, if you want, for the curriculum and everything else, to me that is fine, but it needs to be done you know properly...It would work better if maybe both entities, as in the academic institutions and the professional board, or whoever they assign to the role, work together (P5).*

This finding supports Winberg's observation that '[a]dvisory committee meetings became a site of curricular struggle' (2005 p.194).

This frustration was not as evident among those who displayed less agency. While academics are accustomed to including industry stakeholders in curriculum design and review discussions, this practice is not uniformly conducted throughout the institution. Often the degree to which curriculum design collaboration takes place is determined by the culture of the particular workgroup within the department. Thus while it is mandatory for all departments within DUT to have an advisory board comprised of members from other institutions of learning, students, industry and professional boards (if applicable), the level of each advisory board's involvement differs among departments. In the data we see that those academics who displayed less agency were members of workgroups, in some cases whole departments, that were happy to take their curriculum cues almost entirely from industry, and to encourage industry role-players to take a very active role in determining the curriculum processes:

*we did have an advisory board, we're hoping to set one up um starting next year, um again, to revive it, it was quite useful and I think it's necessary um because I mean industry never...they don't you know...they don't mince their words when they say what it is that they want from the students (P9);*

*We have to [make the shift towards more theoretical understandings] but we still have to keep the practical component, it's a reality, it's making them to be more...in terms of job entrance, skills etc, from the skills aspect it's very, very huge, and every time you talk to the managers they tell you their needs, so we have to answer to them and most of them are practically orientated rather than theoretically orientated (P11).*

Whatever their level of engagement with industry, the responses of all participants reflected the strong pull of industry and their commitment to providing learning programmes that meet the needs of employers within their professions. However the data also revealed that participants whose workgroups seemed to have an uncritical acceptance that curriculum decisions would be led by industry needs, were those whose conversations revealed little engagement with curriculum issues:

*They [accountants] do come and they give an idea of exactly what they're looking for when it comes to students and what direction...for example, if*

*you're an accounting student or an auditing student, where you would fit, obviously (P6).*

Notwithstanding the differences in the ways that these academics interacted with industry stakeholders, what is most significant is that UoT academics are accustomed to and generally accepting of the idea that their curricula are open to the input and scrutiny of external stakeholders. Before the dissolution of SERTEC, the statutory body that monitored and evaluated technician programmes, there were 'regular inspections of programmes, which were evaluated according to approved curricular documents, some of which were as much as twenty years old' (Winberg, 2005 p.193).

Against the current demands of the education system reforms and the resulting sense of confusion and uncertainty that do not provide these academics with the 'stability, coherence and continuity' through which identities are built (Henkel, 2004 p.169), I would argue that their professions and industry connections *did* provide them with the stability and sense of belonging. These participants understood the values of the industry; they spoke the language of the industry; were familiar with its strengths and weaknesses, and they perceived themselves to have a clear idea of industry expectations. In a recent article, Winberg (2005) too refers to the way academics identify with their profession. In this study it was noticeable in the confident way that some participants talked about their industry trends and developments, structure, and processes:

*I also serve on the Professional Board for EC [Emergency Care] practitioners and then I also serve on the overarching body which is the Health Professions Council, and part of our duty as the HPC is the ETQA for health and our professional board is the SGB for our profession...and I'm the chair of the education committee of the Professional Board (P3).*

### **6.2.3 Departmental workgroup identity**

In the previous section I described my understanding of academic identity as constructed through the study participants' strong affinity with the industry or profession, and their belief that they are in touch with the educational requirements of those professions. In this section I consider discourses of academic identity

constructed through the academic departmental workgroups. At the risk of oversimplification, perhaps the best way for me to distinguish between the profession and the academic discipline is to contend that the profession or industry is situated in the workplace and is usually controlled by employers and professional boards (where applicable). The academic discipline, on the other hand, is usually situated within a learning institution (in this case a UoT) and comprises related learning needed to become a member of a profession. I specifically refer here to learning within a UoT which, at the under-graduate level, is more particularly geared towards preparing learners for entry into particular vocations than most generic university degrees. A few examples are Clothing Technology, Interior Design, Pulp and Paper and Biomedical Technology.

Within DUT, as is the case in many other institutions, an academic department houses staff members who work within one discipline or within a few closely-related disciplines. Academics can often be heard saying to someone 'I belong to xyz department' which suggests that an academic department represents more than simply a physical location for an office. Although there have been recent structural changes to the size and shape of academic departments at DUT, at the time when this research was conducted there was a plethora of departments which generally followed the narrow structure of the programmes being offered by the institution, e.g. the Department of Chemical Engineering offered programmes in Chemical Engineering, and the Department of Mechanical Engineering offered programmes in Mechanical Engineering.

Despite the different disciplines all being geared towards a common institutional goal (amongst others) of preparing learners for entry into the workplace, research suggests there are differences in the ways that those who work within different disciplines view the world and knowledge. Becher and Trowler refer to academic communities or disciplinary clusters as 'academic tribes' that have distinctive cultures or 'taken-for-granted values, attitudes and ways of behaving' that are reinforced through practice and are related to their disciplinary knowledge or 'territories' (2001 p.23). Muller supports this idea that disciplinary forms are distinct and different, each with 'its own intellectual values, its own cultural domain, and its

own cognitive territory' which he believes both challenges and enables curriculum planning (2008 p.12). Muller goes on to argue that 'tribes' have differing degrees of social and theoretical interdependence.

While issues relating to the importance of disciplinary knowledge for meaningful curriculum transformation will be discussed later in this chapter, at this stage my intention is simply to illustrate what the evidence in the data suggests about the importance of departmental workgroups, usually discipline-based, not only as clusters of academics who share a certain knowledge base or work in the same profession. Their function extends beyond the bounds of knowledge-related issues and this is evidenced in some of the participant responses. An exploration of the agency groupings (comprising the continuum of more agentic though to less agentic individuals) discussed earlier in this chapter uncovered some interesting findings that relate to the importance of affinity-groups for academic agency. A few examples have been drawn from the data and will be discussed below to illustrate this point.

Participant Six worked in a large department within a faculty that housed approximately half of the institution's students. The lecturers within this department taught large classes and carried contact-heavy teaching timetables:

*we always say it's fine to lecture but it's..., from a tutorial perspective it's not easy because all you doing is walk in there, doing your 45 minutes and you're out, you're not spending time, you don't have the time (P6).*

The participant indicated that the only curriculum communication in which she was directly involved was with other staff members who taught the same subject:

*[subject X] 1, 2 and 3 we have our meetings so we get to communicate so [subject X] 3 will tell us, okay this is what is changing and can't we pass it on to [subject X] 1, we have that communication (P6).*

These smaller workgroups within the department tended only to focus on the content of their subject across the levels, and were not involved in broader curriculum discussions. One aspect of the departmental culture illustrated through the conversation with Participant Six was an acceptance that their main task was to

teach their large classes, focus on their own subject content and leave the curriculum strategising to their departmental head who carried authority within the department. Thus the responsibility for curriculum change was not owned and was instead transferred to another individual. The following extracts from our conversation illustrate these points:

*what [HoD name] was saying...let's try and change the structure, don't have tests, let's give them assignments (P6);*

*and [HoD name] knows because he's part of this industry thing (P6); [HoD name] says you know we've got no choice people, through put rate, next thing you know, there's [subject X] 1...81% coming into [subject X] 2...I mean they are going to fail (P6).*

Further to this, while the participant displayed a great deal of negativity about institutional management, the physical conditions of teaching venues, the quality of learners, she indicated a great deal of departmental loyalty. She indicated that members of her department were like-minded in their complaints about the institutional management, but that as a department they were very happy:

*no matter how much of problems we have with the students and we complain about everything else, as a department we help each other (P6).*

She was quick to point out that despite the discomfort caused by the institutional merger, she and her colleagues were very happy within their department:

*we all get on so well, it's unbelievable, we get on...we act like a family here...we do things together (P6);*

*I would say the best thing that came out of the merger is the department we have (P6)*

*we've merged as a department perfectly (P6).*

In the case of this participant, evidence suggests that the teaching and learning culture within the department was hierarchical, with the staff led by a departmental head who made teaching and learning decisions and passed them on to the other staff members. This staff member seemed to feel comfortable with the idea of not having either the power or responsibility for making teaching and learning decisions. Smaller subject-based curriculum workgroups within this large department were

focussed on developing discrete chunks of learning not necessarily linked with the learning in other areas of the broader discipline. Regarding the social culture of the department, the participant indicated that there was a shared negativity about the management of the institution, staff working conditions, and the deficiencies of the students. There was a sense that this common attitude had in some ways unified the departmental members who had bonded, developed close connections to one another and formed a cohesive unit.

In the case of Participant One, he had been a departmental technician before being appointed as a lecturer. Neither he nor anybody left in his department had a Masters degree or any academic background: *'I think when [name] and [name] and the guys all left...they took their years of experience and everything with them'* (P1). All staff members 'moonlighted' by working as practising professionals within their industry and our conversation was dominated by his focus on practical and technical details. The participant clearly showed that he was comfortable when sharing industry-related facts and figures and his responses were less convincing when it came to discussing educational issues. In an earlier section I discussed how this participant attempted to cover for lack of curriculum engagement by littering his responses with educationally 'correct' terminology and statements that did not stand up to further gentle probing. Subsequent to the merger, all senior departmental staff members had resigned from the institution, leaving the participant expressing concern that neither he nor his remaining colleagues had the academic experience or expertise to run the department: *'we young guys were left high and dry'* (P1). Left to function within this vacuum, the participant clearly felt abandoned. To add to the stress and pressures being felt, this department was also under threat of closure. Given this scenario, the main focus of the departmental workgroup (as represented by this participant) was upon survival and trying to keep the departmental work going so that the entire department did not collapse:

*I'm not going to let the department die...I'm not going to let the department collapse or whatever because of...you know the management cannot do this or do that* (P1).

What seemed evident in the case above is that the lack of departmental leadership, the limited experience and low qualifications of the staff had contributed towards the fragility of the department and the insecurity felt by this participant which were manifest throughout our conversation. His attempt to assume individual agency around departmental initiatives, shown partly in his use of the first person singular (also discussed earlier in this chapter), did not stand up to close scrutiny and simply emphasised his vulnerability. What this exposed was a fierce loyalty towards the profession, with a high value placed on industry developments coupled with a lack of engagement around academic issues.

Participant Eight, a lecturer in post-graduate programmes with clear insight into the challenges facing her students, most of whom have experience in the field, expressed her dismay that innovative curriculum changes designed to promote critical awareness and also to transform existing power relations had been abandoned since the merger. She viewed her department's participative curriculum development practices prior to the merger, including negotiating and co-constructing curricula with students, as highly effective and beneficial:

*...because they're telling me what it is they need to do, and then we don't do it necessarily in terms of content, so I talk to them about...it's very applied and they're also told if there is anything that we are doing that you don't see the relevance, don't do it, we'll reformulate your assignments because it's got to be better than anything that's not having an immediacy, because that's where they're working, what I've done is I've created a curriculum that they can use in their workplace setting (P8).*

She described their collaborative curriculum and teaching practices:

*we took a communal responsibility for each other's programmes, it was never "your students are failing" you know, they were ours, all of them were ours, so if there was a problem with the one it was how do we deal with this (P8),*

and referred to the more traditional and restrictive practices that have been established since the merger:

*so now the big change is now we have programme coordinators but the only thing about programme coordinators they have lots of responsibility for the*



*admin, there's no notion that there's actually a theoretical foundation underpinning the teaching (P8).*

The participant's department, originally part of Technikon Natal, had not had an ML Sultan Technikon counterpart with which to merge but had been impacted by the institutional merger in many ways through institutional ethos shifts, physical relocation, resource limitations, and management changes. Unlike Participant Eight who constructed herself as having less power to determine the curriculum process as a result of the changes that had taken place, Participant Three's confidence about his role in curriculum development, his knowledge of student and industry needs and his grasp of institutional and national policy requirements were solid and supported by examples of changes already implemented:

*and I've put in a lot of effort into making it [the department] grow and making it financially viable and getting the throughput [rate improved]'; 'I think I've driven that...without trying to sound like I'm blowing my horn but I believe that was my duty as a HoD (P3).*

As seen in the above quote, the participant made very few references to the role that his departmental colleagues played and he exhibited a managerial approach in both his departmental leadership and the significance that he attributed to the role that systems and structures play in the efficient and productive functioning of the institution. This participant placed a high value on his membership of several different national and institutional bodies. He was also very savvy about the internal institutional politics and about how to operate within the context of the institutional culture, which as we have seen already, was fraught with conflict and tension:

*when we had to review all the rules which we did as a faculty based exercise...in fact it was one of my suggestions that rules...it goes back to the department...the department looks at the rules...they revise them and take them back to faculty board...we have a special meeting for that where we clear it out across the board...I found again that the entry requirements were almost the same [across the faculty]...but I held back on saying that at that point in time because it wasn't the forum to do so... (P3).*

What seems to be illustrated in the responses of Participant Three is that he had a sound grasp of the institutional context and the ways to operate effectively within this environment. His confident construction of his academic identity empowered him to take control of his department's curriculum processes and he was certain that his leadership would result in the kind of curriculum needed for his profession. What was also clear, though, was that despite his own agency he was unable to extend those changes beyond the boundaries of his own department as the values and practices at the broader faculty and institutional level did not support such change. This participant's leadership style and willingness to move towards changed practices seems to differ from that which Winberg described in her observation: 'the leadership (predominantly at the head of department level) consisted of the people originally recruited from industry, who did not have the experience, the qualifications, or the inclination to provide academic leadership' (2005 p.194).

The point of making reference to the views of these two participants who, in contrast with other participants, expressed emancipatory understandings of curriculum, is partly to highlight the differences between these understandings and those of the other participants. More significantly, however, my aim is to bring to light the difficulties of implementing and sustaining transformative practices within an environment that does not seem to support or foster such practices. Despite Participant Three's enthusiasm and belief in the power of curriculum to transform the lives of learners and improve professional practices, he cited many impediments to innovative curriculum practice, including the national technikon curriculum policy (NATED 151)<sup>42</sup> which severely restricted any efforts to transform curricula and placed a huge administrative burden on departments wishing to change their curricula. This participant explained how he had to manipulate his programme offerings in order to comply with the outdated policy while attempting to meet professional and learner needs:

*you have the parent subject...if you've got [subject X] that's a NATED 151 [subject]...but under [subject X] we created these sub-modules so then you*

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<sup>42</sup> NATED 151 (1999) outlined subject offerings names, levels and credits for each approved qualification and had not yet been discontinued despite its lack of alignment with the revised qualification level descriptors and credit requirements within the reformed system

*have all of these modules and at the end of it all I've got to collapse all the marks into one and then you get [subject X] (P3).*

Participant Three also expressed his desire for cross-disciplinary collaboration - 'so *it's not one person battling the odds and fighting the system here, it's collective minds for the right reasons and for the students*' (P3) - and was frustrated at the lack of faculty and institutional support. Despite his being a representative on Faculty Board and Senate, he articulated his view that he was unable to elicit support for changed curriculum practices:

*[at Faculty meetings] I've asked who's recurriculating here, everyone says yes we are, I said okay so everyone has research method in your programmes...its part of your fourth year, what are your outcomes...oh, I have this and I have that...I said wait a minute, why are we not doing something like that generically, you know, why are we not talking about these things generically so you don't have to write that in...who's actually talking about HIV as a big issue...it's a national imperative' (P3).*

Participant Eight had the added frustration of having already successfully implemented transformed practices prior to the merger and then witnessing what she perceived to be the reversal of these practices within the merged department. Her frustration was caused by having in the past been an active participant within a workgroup that valued collaborative curriculum engagement and innovative teaching and learning. However, with the entry of new members (and a new departmental head) into the workgroup, the culture of the workgroup changed and different values and practices were adopted. When asked about current curriculum development practices, her response was as follows:

*Now?...we do a lot more things by the book, um...the book is CHED<sup>43</sup>, but superficial CHED you know, bring CHED along to see what we're doing is correct...in terms of...templates (P8);*

*[the past knowledge and experience]...is thrown out totally, and I'm regarded as somebody who knows nothing, really knows absolutely...nothing (P8).*

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<sup>43</sup> CHED was the Centre for Higher Education Development, a unit in the merged institution responsible for assisting staff with academic development

The critically reflective responses of these two participants who were trying to challenge the pedagogical status quo by engaging with curriculum as socially constructed and potentially transformative were not typical of the other participant responses evidenced in the data. The conceptualisations of curriculum evident in the rest of the participants' responses, ranging from those that view it as simply a syllabus to those who recognise that curriculum encompasses more than subject content, and who did not attribute a social and political role to curriculum and were closely aligned with traditional notions of curriculum, teaching and learning:

*from time to time...we take our subjects, all of them, take a look at them and check if they still comply with the expectations of academia and industry...we get feedback...and readjust or include certain things that were not there (P4); sometimes there are ...like subject groups where they sit together, but there are clashes because every group tries to defend itself (P7).*

The analysis above shows that established departmental workgroups had been disrupted and new workgroups were still forming resulting in departmental workgroup cultures that range from those in which there was a strong sense of community, and others in which tensions and conflict were manifest. While I acknowledge that there are surely many factors, including other workgroups, in the participants' worlds that contributed to their different constructions of academic identity, the data does seem to point to some correlation between the relationships formed within particular workgroups and the curriculum responses displayed by those who work within them.

In the discussion of discourses of academic identity in this chapter, we have thus far considered the continuum of agency displayed by participants and the important role that meso-level workgroups (Trowler, 2008), specifically professional and departmental workgroups, play in the lives of academics. My intention has not been to suggest that academics can only thrive within homogenous, supportive environments in which 'consensus is privileged over difference' and the status quo is valued 'as a smooth-running machine operating for the general good' (Trowler, 2008 pp.53-4.). The institutions (that became DUT) as they existed prior to the merger were by no means smooth-running machines and further evidence of outdated teaching and learning practices will be shown through the course of this chapter.

There are indications that some degree of tension and conflict can in fact be beneficial, and in fact important, for the stimulation of change.

In the discussion on academic identity in Chapter Three, I explored the notion of communities of practice and the high value placed upon consensus and shared understanding within this conceptualisation of communities. In brief, Wenger et al. (2002) claimed that reliance on communities of practice within an organisation can transform the landscape of that organisation in which domains of knowledge are a home for identity, a visible, stable and enduring part of the organisation, and point at which people from different divisions can be connected. Significant for this study is Wenger et al.'s assertion that organisations can contribute to or detract from the effective existence of communities of practice. If barriers are removed, participation is encouraged and communities of practice are given legitimacy, 'a voice in decisions and legitimacy in influencing operating units, and developing internal processes for managing the value they create', they are more likely to 'achieve their full potential' (Wenger et al., 2002 p.13). The evidence from this data will continue to reveal that for some participants who have not been overwhelmed by the negativity that has accompanied the shifts, the tensions and conflict within their communities of practice have turned them into 'sites of contest between competing ways of seeing and doing' and have stimulated reflection and a willingness to consider new ways of working (Trowler, 2008 p52).

What we have seen in this section is that those participants whose workgroups are open to change and are less ossified (Trowler, 2008) seemed to construct their academic identities as more change-willing and agentic. However, we need to ask to what extent agency is enough – enough to stimulate and motivate change in other individuals, enough to meet the challenges of changing modes of knowledge production, enough to shift practices to meet current and future student, industry and national needs.

### **6.3 Conclusion**

The analysis in this chapter has explored the ways that academics construct their academic identities and what this means for their curriculum practices. It has also

considered different influences upon their academic identity construction and the extent to which the participants' working environment either facilitates or constrains their responses to curriculum change. There is evidence that the participants' responses reflect the values and assumptions that have become part of the institutional and workgroup cultures. By this I mean that the sets of practices and frameworks of meaning around curriculum have become internalised (Trowler, 2008).

Aside from the issues discussed in this chapter, higher education change in South Africa has also presented many challenges to the knowledge discourses of higher education academics. In Chapter Seven, I will consider what the data reveals about these discourses and the shifts required to meet the needs of students.

## **Chapter Seven: Discourses of knowledge**

### **7.1 Introduction**

While Chapter Five and Six focused on the discourses of change and identity and how these related to their construction of curriculum discourses, this chapter identifies and explores what participant responses reveal about their discursive constructions of knowledge. The literature (see Chapter Three) suggests that universities are being faced with the challenges of interrogating their own systems and disciplinary structures that chiefly focus on a traditional mode of specialised knowledge production. Through the course of this chapter, the exploration of participant knowledge discourses provides insights into the ways that they construct curriculum, bringing to light the challenges for curriculum change.

In Chapter Five it was evident that respondents in this study did not acknowledge their working worlds as being impacted by global trends such as marketisation, massification and managerialism. In the same way, the importance of understanding the impact of globalisation on knowledge production, and in particular the process of dynamic competition essential to understanding globalisation was not evident in the data for this study. Nor was there any evidence in the data to suggest that the participants felt, as Gibbons (1994) does, that universities are well-placed to play a significant role in that part of the emerging global economy in which dynamic competition elicits knowledge solutions. The data about participant knowledge discourses shows that the majority of these participants were more focussed on the immediate and on issues that impact them daily within their own working environments without reflecting on how these feed into or arise from macro processes. As is seen later in this chapter, their concern with subject-matter and logistical issues features far more strongly in their responses than do issues around knowledge generation.

### **7.2 Discourses of knowledge and curriculum**

As discussed in Chapter Three, my understanding is that curriculum development is inextricably linked with issues of knowledge construction. Bernstein's (1999) pedagogic device helps us to understand the recontextualising of knowledge and its communication through curriculum. This leads me to begin with a discussion about

the view of knowledge most evident in the data. The dominant view of knowledge arising from the data is one that resonates with an understanding of knowledge that Habermas (1972) refers to as technical, and Grundy (1987) calls empirical-analytic. When applied to education, this technical understanding is linked to a traditional paradigm (Grundy, 1987), and those operating within the technical interest take the view that knowledge exists as an objective, value-neutral truth. Within this set of technical assumptions, curriculum reform that is undertaken results to a large degree in decontextualised curricula (Grundy, 1987). Grundy (1987) refers to curriculum design practices that are informed by a technical interest as 'curriculum as product'. This means that students or their work are the products of the application of pre-determined curriculum programmes, plans and learning objectives developed and controlled centrally. The technikon curriculum design system in many ways enabled this decontextualisation of curricula as is evidenced in the data discussed below.

### ***7.2.1 Technikon curriculum design system***

Within technikons, the curriculum design system known as convenorship assigned responsibility for qualification design and registration to one technikon among those that offered a particular qualification. Through this system of strong regulatory discourse, the curriculum for each qualification offered was developed by a convening technikon that assumed national responsibility for developing the curriculum and disseminating it to the other technikons offering the same qualification. The registration included the titles of subjects and levels at which they were to be offered, as well as the credit values of each subject which determined the number of weekly lectures, tutorials and practicals. The other, non-convenor technikons were then obliged to offer the programme as it was registered. This meant that each technikon convened a number of qualifications, for example, Technikon Natal convened qualifications in 19 different fields, including Graphic Design, Architectural Technology, Biotechnology and Radiography. Although all technikons were free to participate in this process, the system was 'highly bureaucratic, power being vested in those technikons which hold convenorship for particular programmes' (Naidoo & Cooke, 1998 p.12). One participant attested to this, stressing how difficult it was to obtain the curriculum information from



counterparts within the convening institution: *'sometimes the communication with the convenor institutions is not so easy to get all the information'* (P11).

In the case of some qualifications, there was a collaborative approach which involved regular meetings and communication among colleagues from departments of all technikons offering the particular qualification:

*when we met we'd also discuss and talk about things and we tried to find ways that if people moved across [from one institution to another] that we would recognise things [their learning in another institution], but there still...but there's still big differences, but we were still flexible enough...and so in a way it was good* (P8).

While a few of the participants shared this view that the convenorship system had some positive aspects, they also acknowledged that it was inflexible and restrictive, encouraging narrow constructions of knowledge that led to curriculum lacking in innovation:

*I like the idea of developing the outcomes for the qualification, but I also like to see that each institution packages those outcomes how they want, they must go through their own curriculum development and learning programme processes because I think that we don't want to stifle individuality* (P3).

Talking about a meeting held to discuss the qualification design created by a convening technikon, one participant had this to say:

*I remember looking at...at the curriculum and it was so...it was like a syllabus, it was so detailed, and I...I remember thinking this is incredibly stupid,...um how can you teach the same things [in all institutions across the country], and be so totally controlled that there's two periods for this or that, there's no flexibility, it doesn't allow you to respond* (P8).

In response to a question about the demise of the convenorship system, a participant's response revealed a willingness to move away from this regulatory construction of knowledge and explore more flexible curriculum approaches:

*Excellent!...I think we must mould our own identity...every department should mould their own identity and their own qualification in collaboration with other departments* (P2).

Although the use of the convenorship system should have potentially facilitated transferability, enabling students and staff to move more easily between institutions, for a variety of reasons this did not work as it was perhaps designed to do. Despite the common framework created through national convenorship, institutions were able to introduce a percentage of local content and to establish their own rules regarding minimum entrance requirements<sup>44</sup> to particular programmes. This has impacted on the quality of programmes offered across different institutions and has meant that student portability of incomplete qualifications to a different institution has been made more difficult. Another contributing factor to this inflexibility has been the lack of qualification and subject outcomes within the NATED 151 document (DoE, 1999b) which was only abolished in 2008. Without the existence of outcomes and assessment criteria for each programme, the quality of programmes across technikons differed markedly and resulted in certain institutions having better reputations than others for offering more challenging and relevant programmes.

Looking at this system in terms of Bernstein's (2000) descriptions of 'classification' and 'framing', the data reveals that the convenorship system constrained flexibility and adaptability to local needs, and encouraged the creation of strong boundaries between programmes and even between subjects within one programme. Initiatives taken by individual technikon departments to review and revise their programmes in consultation with industry stakeholders and/or professional bodies were hampered by bureaucracy and subject 'boundaries' that discouraged integration and flexibility. Until the demise of the convenorship system it was only possible to change subject names by undertaking a lengthy process requiring consultation with all other institutions offering the programme, and completing a number of forms that took time to work their way through the national and institutional approval mechanisms. What the data revealed is that this led to much frustration among some staff who felt that their programme responsiveness to industry needs and developments within their discipline areas was compromised by this system that hampered attempts to be proactive and make relevant changes.

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<sup>44</sup> There are regulations stipulating minimum student entrance requirements to a UoT, but institutions are entitled to raise these and to create their own admission requirements to particular programmes.

A further consequence of strong classification (Bernstein, 2000) seen within the data is that at DUT there has been a lack of programme coordination and the tendency of academic staff to focus only on their particular subject offerings often without considering each subject within the context of the whole programme. This has led to gaps and overlaps within programmes as some content is repeated across subjects while other content is neglected. Bernstein (2000) suggests that classification is likely to feature more strongly in highly specialised and powerful disciplines with high status because they want to maintain their insularity and distance from other disciplines. In the case of engineering which, in many higher education institutions is housed within its own school or faculty, the profession has its own professional quality assurance body (Engineering Council of South Africa) that sets engineering standards, provides guidelines for programme design and evaluates standards of provision within higher education institutions. Within DUT, even the boundaries between the sub-disciplines of engineering were carefully upheld, with mechanical, civil, chemical, electrical and electronic engineering operating independently. Each existed within a separate department, with a different head of programme, offered a strongly framed programme in which synergies with other engineering programmes were seldom acknowledged, and provided few or no opportunities for learners to transfer across the sub-disciplines. Within DUT, this strong classification was evident not only in 'high status' disciplines such as engineering, but within other disciplines as well. One participant drew attention to this:

*...you've got Fine Art, Photography, Jewellery [indicating separate streams]  
...it should be Fine Art, Photography, Jewellery [indicating linked  
programmes]...and the industry will tell you that they need people who can  
move across disciplines in industry (P2).*

What the data suggests is that the convenorship system encouraged strongly framed curricula (Bernstein, 2000), in which not only was the subject content clearly demarcated, but the traditions, discourses and pedagogic practices of individual subjects were highly valued and carefully guarded. Some institutions sought to remedy this situation by establishing programme teams comprising a group of departmental staff members who were responsible for reviewing their entire programme and identifying those areas requiring attention in the interests of

improving the quality and relevance of the programme. This practice has continued in many institutions.

Winberg claims that 'from its inception, and in a large measure due to the role of industry, technikon education has been plagued with a large bureaucracy which has, ironically, placed many constraints on the idea of education for the needs of industry' (2005 p.192). She also maintains that 'this bureaucracy inhibited the development of new programmes, as well as curriculum development in existing ones' (2005 p.193). In explaining why his department had made little progress with curriculum changes, one participant referred to the complexity and laborious nature of the system:

*because of the funding structure...the funding formula and the process involved...you know the whole quality issue and the whole curriculum issue and it has to go to faculty board...and the whole thing...and the staff felt it was just a bit too much (P1).*

The paradigm shift in which the HEQF outlines the higher education qualification structure and provides broad descriptors for qualifications within that framework, means that responsibility for developing programme curricula rests squarely on the shoulders of the departments and faculties that offer the programmes. Naidoo and Cooke refer to this as curriculum liberation which enables each [institution] to take ownership of the process and become involved with decision-making (1998 p.12). However the constraints of the technikon curriculum design system have impacted on the capacity of academics to engage with curriculum in ways that challenge the status quo and enable them to make the shifts necessary for preparing learners to enter workplaces that have undergone dramatic changes in recent years. McKenna and Sutherland state that 'the need to develop graduates who can contribute to a workforce that is both technically trained and capable of critical thought and self-development, through innovative teaching and learning is widely acknowledged' (2006 p.21). In order to fulfil this function, there is a need to develop reflective practices that provide learners with technical skills and critical problem-solving abilities.

With many academic departments remaining uninvolved in curriculum discussions and design processes, academics simply taught their subjects according to subject outlines provided for them. This construction of curriculum sees education as largely for the purpose of preparing learners for work and for ‘training’ people to master skills. Instructors are often provided with syllabuses and course materials, nationally prescribed textbooks, and strict guidelines that reduce lecturers to purveyors of information and skills, and students to receptacles into which these skills are ‘poured’ and expected to be reproduced. This traditional approach could be described as an instrumentalist view of learning. A definition of curriculum situated within this paradigm might read as follows: a curriculum is ‘courses and subjects which comprise the intended outcomes of teaching, the knowledge and skills which it is the business of education to transmit’ (Griffin, 1983 p.12). Griffin’s definition echoed with the understanding of curriculum presented by most of the study participants right across the agency-continuum:

*I think when you say curriculum, I think of syllabus (P10);  
so the curriculum would be in my view a process of taking what we call the  
product “education” that we want to give and make sure that the way you give  
it to the learner is...um...compatible with the nature of the learner... (P4).*

This technicist approach does not challenge existing ways of working or contest traditional approaches to learning that have been so prevalent in South African education (see Chapter Two, Section Four), and reflects that academic curriculum discourses are still impacted by the discourses underpinning the technikon curriculum design system. Thus the continuum of agency evident in participant responses, while bringing to light degrees of willingness and capacity, does not for the most part reveal reflective discourses and practices that challenge the current pedagogical status quo. What has emerged (with notable exceptions discussed later in this chapter), is that instead of intellectually engaging with broader issues around curriculum and learning, participants have taken on a technicist approach with a view to compliance.

Given the history of education in South Africa, it stands to reason that we can attribute many of the academics’ existing knowledge discourses impacting on their

curriculum approaches to that context. In their study on negotiating higher education teacher identity, Hockings et al (2009) pointed to the significance of past school, college and university experiences in influencing constructions of knowledge. Curriculum development approaches adopted under apartheid informed by CNE and Fundamental Pedagogics (see Chapter Two, Section Two), were largely positivistic and technicist. As discussed in Chapter Two, the apartheid government created a suite of legislation designed to exercise control over its citizens and to maintain the status quo. One of their most powerful tools was the education system. Christian National Education, with Fundamental Pedagogics as 'the philosophical base of the curriculum' (Naicker, 2000 p.1), was the educational vehicle used by the apartheid government to ensure that its purposes of maintaining a White-dominated society would become entrenched.

Despite the changed contextual realities and the eradication of racist ideology underpinning social, economic and education policy, the positivist approach that grew out of the apartheid government's educational philosophy was still apparent in many participant conceptualisations of curriculum. It is clearly revealed in their narrow views of curriculum, as seen in the following example which illustrates a view of curriculum as a collection of discrete subjects. When asked about her curriculum, Participant Six spoke of the delivery of her specific subject as a discrete entity:

*To me a person speaking about curriculum is...uh...in for example [subject X] aspect for the National Diploma: [qualification name] I would say curriculum is what is important for the actual [subject X] (P6).*

Having said this, the critically reflective responses of a couple of participants show glimpses of their view that curriculum inquiry is inextricably linked with context and that it can be a useful instrument for effecting change:

*now we're a developing nation and where we fit into the world is we're one of five developing countries and how do we change that...we change that through education, through upskilling, through development and you can't really look at your profession and say well it doesn't matter we're just training [name of profession]...we're not just doing that...you train a Black person from a rural area...that person goes back to that rural area and works in that*

*area and is now feeding ten other people because that's the reality...you're moving them from below the breadline to above the breadline so people there start to...will stop thinking about survival and will start thinking of other things... (P3);*

*it's [the curriculum] able to transform...bring an individual in that gets empowered through this process to meet the qualification requirements and then qualify as an individual to be able to function out in society. Now the way we approach how we're going to achieve the qualification is through the curriculum uh process...through the curriculum so we have to develop that (P3).*

The findings from the data illustrate the view that institutional infrastructure and allocation of resources mitigate against the implementation of innovative curriculum practices. This is evident in the lack of integration of subjects traditionally not offered by the department offering a particular programme, but serviced by other departments within the institution (commonly referred to as 'service departments'). Many of the participants referred to the tensions existing between departments offering learning programmes and those departments, usually referred to as 'service' departments, offering one particular course within a programme:

*You go to servicing departments and ask them to show you learner guides. I can tell you something there's poor excuses for learner guides...if learner guides are coming together it's because they've been forced to for whatever...and...and...you can see the quality of those learner guides are quite debatable (P3).*

They expressed frustration with the service departments' apparent reluctance to engage in curriculum discussions with the host department and their seeming insistence upon offering their courses without aligning them to the needs of learners within the host programme who would be required to apply their learning to their particular field of study. Some examples of this tension follow:

*the Science people just wanted the syllabus that did a-b-c and you wrote an exam and you did an assignment and that was it, and then there were some of us who were willing to go out and experiment with different ways of putting*

*this whole curriculum together and looking at it from outcomes-based point of view, like that's what we need out there so how are we going to get there, and what do we need to get there (P10);*

*No, well now you see there's Maths, there's Physics...in engineering specifically I'm talking about...there's Maths, there's Physics...service subjects...students are doing Maths in a vacuum...you've got to do a service subject within a context (P2);*

*so then maybe we need to engage them [the service departments] even more if...because we can't sort of force...maybe we will engage the service departments...we can't force them to mentor and do whatever..., but maybe we will have to have such a programme,...I don't know, not...not what is offered now where you just see them once and then we just ask them are you fine are you coping and they say yes and then that's it (P5);*

*We try not to let them run the course that they run, we want them to teach something that is...that is you know suitable for our students, otherwise what's the point we want something that they can use and learn from (P9).*

Current common practice within the institution is to combine learners from a number of different programmes within one classroom for the shared 'service' subjects such as English, Mathematics or Economics. These subjects are offered by departments other than the programme 'home' department. The customising of externally serviced subjects to suit the vocational programme within which the subject is offered has significant resource implications for the institution. There was a perception articulated by some of the participants that the lack of institutional support for a more integrated 'servicing' approach supports the institutional drive for efficiency and resource conservation despite evidence that there are negative educational consequences for the learners: *'it's more efficient to have bigger classes [but] look at their throughput rate'* (P2). Some participants laid the responsibility for bottlenecks<sup>45</sup> within their programmes squarely on the shoulders of the service departments:

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<sup>45</sup> Bottlenecks are created when learners fail a pre-requisite subject which prevents them from proceeding to the next level of their programme. An example is in some Science and Engineering programmes where learners are required to pass Mathematics and Physics, usually serviced subjects, before they can proceed to the next level of their programme



*bottlenecks in [name of subject]...mainly because that's the only main other major<sup>46</sup>...main subject that we rely on from servicing...it's sort of like part of the major (P4); so the problem is just [names of subjects, those elementary subjects that would create the bottlenecks such that we don't get our throughput...not our discipline subjects necessarily...(P5).*

What we see demonstrated in the extracts above are clashes between workgroups with different discursive constructions of knowledge. 'Service' departments have their own internal pressures and concerns which include managing their human resources to accommodate all the different requirements of the various departments. Furthermore, they are aligned to their own disciplinary discourses and practices and resist compromising the quality of learning within the areas they teach. While some of them might be sympathetic to the requests from the departments they service, they construct this knowledge as discipline-specific and feel that they are best placed to determine what should be taught.

In order to address these issues, some programme heads have begun to offer the subjects traditionally serviced by other departments internally rather than using other departments to provide the courses for them. This enables them to have more control over their curriculum and to ensure that the learning is more relevant and applicable within the learners' field of study:

*we did have one challenge which was [subjects X and Y]...but what we did when we were modularising...is that we took [subject X] and we integrated it where we felt it was absolutely essential...and it's helped...the students love it...we love it because it's related to everyday life, you know, and that's what I believe needs to be done (P3).*

The argument supporting initiatives such as the one described above, is that it is what industry wants. However, one of the arguments against adopting such an approach is that it might compromise the quality of the disciplinary learning. Without 'subject specialists' offering a specific course, e.g. Physics 1, there is a possibility that a 'watered down' version of the subject will be offered which has no application

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<sup>46</sup> The programmatic nature of UoT qualifications means that there are no elected major subjects as such. Students complete a prescribed programme structure, though it is sometimes possible to choose a few electives.

outside of the narrow field for which the students are being prepared. As discussed in Chapter Three, Section Four, technikons (and now UoTs) have been widely criticised for neglecting underpinning knowledge and theoretical frameworks, and for focussing almost exclusively on industry needs. There appears to be what Winberg refers to as 'persistence of the strong mindsets and practices associated with an older version of educating for the needs of industry' (2005 p.194) which to a large extent has constrained the shift towards more collaborative practices and the development of more relevant programmes.

With the structural shift that has seen the establishment of UoTs within an increasingly *knowledge-based* working world, an approach that cuts back on the theoretical foundations that underpin particular disciplines has dubious merit. There are alternative approaches which could be considered. These might include additional tutorials where learners from a particular learning programme gather to discuss the application of knowledge within their own field, and the design of assessments that encourage learners to solve problems using the theory they have learnt. However, we have seen in earlier discussions that many factors mitigate against adopting approaches that are different from established practices. These include the institutional culture of over-teaching, with academics carrying school-like teaching loads, and spending the majority of their time and energy teaching and marking student work:

*she's [the Dean of Faculty] always said we are over-teaching you know, maybe that's true, we've always said that, maybe that's true but we've told her...I told her the pressure that we have from outside to produce what we've produced, you know, and it's getting more and more because now we're getting students that are not as what they used to be...you work more on them (P5).*

The offering of discrete, compartmentalised subjects taught and assessed in ways that do not encourage application of knowledge, is not a phenomenon that exists solely in the case of externally-serviced subjects. Despite the acknowledgement by some participants that learners benefit when subjects which are serviced externally are linked to the learners' field of study, within their own programmes the data

indicated that lecturers work independently and alone, developing and offering their subjects with little collaboration with colleagues to discuss the broader curriculum, synergies, commonalities and learner performance. The data *did* reveal that some academics are critical of the compartmentalisation of knowledge, and the perceived 'territorialism' that exists:

*we are doing something in theory and we are also now doing the very same thing in practical and we're assessing each compartment separately...(P1); they've got this territorial position about their programmes (P2).*

Having said this, the data also showed that even in instances where curriculum meetings and workshops were held, the subject offerings were generally viewed as sacrosanct. This has much to do with fears about job security induced partly by the institutional instability and through its focus on programme viability and feasibility which were both discussed earlier in this thesis.

Several of the study participants' descriptions of curriculum restructuring initiatives reveal that the activities chiefly involve amendments to the subject content, rather than fundamental programme restructuring based on learner, industry and institutional needs:

*There is a person who was responsible for guiding the process [of curriculum development within the department]...and from time to time...I wouldn't be accurate if I think of the frequency...but there are times whether it's when we have the advisory board meetings or...we take our subjects, all of them, take a look at them and check if they still comply with the expectations of academia and industry (P4);*

*We took all our subjects, put them on the board and had to unpack what we've done in each and every one of them (P4);*

*[subject X] 1 just carries over into [subject X] 2, so they tell us where they stopped, we had that meeting...we have a subject committee meeting...we've had...last year, I think it was... (P6).*

This narrow technicist approach to curriculum development, evidenced by the tendency to hold on to existing structures and subject offerings, was simplistically explained by one participant who stated:

*I think to convince the mindset to change is a very difficult thing because people have been here for twenty years...they're used to doing it that way and now they say "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" (P1).*

Given the 'critical shortage of skills in the quantitative, engineering and built environment professions' in South Africa which Lockett and Lockett claim is 'threatening the sustainability of economic growth' (2009 p.471), there is an urgent need for increased curriculum responsiveness within higher education to address this skills shortage. There has been increasing criticism of the university sector, amidst growing concerns that higher education programmes are not meeting the requirements of industry. There is further evidence in the poor student success rates (Scott et al., 2007) that programmes are not meeting the needs of students. Participants spoke openly about all of these matters, discussing issues of curricula needing to meet industry needs and acknowledging the poor student throughput rates:

*they look at, for example [subject name] if there's 120 students and...and ...and basically 50% are failing (P6);*

*we're lecturing and we all want a good throughput at the end of the day but for some reason it's not 100% when it ought to be... (P4);*

*the thing is you know historically we've had a very high failure rate (P1).*

Despite this awareness, participant discourses reveal that right across the agency-continuum, most participants engaged with curriculum issues at a fairly superficial level. They are doing so without drilling down to the heart of the curriculum, exploring its shape and structure within the changed context to examine what the curriculum reveals about views of knowledge and approaches to learning. There is instead a surface approach which amounts to tweaking the curriculum, reviewing and adapting programme outcomes, modifying subject content, and changing the level at which certain subjects are offered. Some evidence from the data of this approach follows:

*curriculum...we start Photoshop from first year level...because Photoshop is a very vast programme' (P1);*

*[curriculum] is to me what maybe loosely could be called a syllabus...it is to me areas or sections that need to be taught or learnt and you know that probably will make sense in the sense that they part of a bigger picture (P5).*

We have seen in these findings thus far that, with some exceptions, the curriculum engagement of participants tended to be shallow and reactionary. Rather than adopting a broad approach to their curriculum planning processes, their approach consisted instead of making largely superficial adaptations for compliance reasons.

There can be little doubt that the history of curriculum development processes adopted by the technikon movement has had much to do with the current curriculum challenges facing academics in UoTs and the largely technicist discourses of knowledge that are manifest in the compliant curriculum approaches adopted by most of the participants in this study. An insight into long-accepted practices within the technikon movement helps us to understand the assumptions about curriculum development that exist as part of the institutional culture. It stands to reason that current curriculum practices have been influenced by these assumptions and goes some way towards explaining the largely shallow and uncritical curriculum approaches adopted by individual academics.

Within the section above my intention has been to show that despite varying degrees of agency adopted by participants, the data revealed that most participants exhibit narrow discursive constructions of knowledge. This resulted in their engaging with curriculum in ways that do not interrogate and explore their shape and structure, or include a deep analysis of learner difficulties, future industry needs and educational requirements. My sense was that participants were tending to take a microscopic rather than telescopic view of their curriculum. There were significant silences around issues of encouraging learner inquiry, critical thinking and independent study. Instead there was an inward-looking focus, with the emphasis on amending subject content, planning and designing within the confines of established disciplinary and departmental parameters.

With the new research agenda adopted by UoTs, and their focus on improving the academic qualifications of existing staff and attracting more qualified staff to the institutions, there is every possibility that academics will be in an improved position to address current and future needs within the field of technological education. However in order to do this, they need also to carefully consider their approaches to knowledge production and dissemination which influence engagement with curriculum and play a role in shaping the curricula we develop. As argued in Chapter Three, Mode 2 knowledge production is a strong influence within the South African higher education sector.

Participants' understandings of knowledge construction and their approaches to teaching and learning (including curriculum) did not fit neatly into either the Mode 1 form of knowledge production widely attributed to universities or into the broader Mode 2 practices (see Chapter Three, Section Two). In this section I continue to explore what participant responses reveal about their construction of dominant modes of knowledge production and consider what these mean for curriculum practices in the increasingly complex global world in which we live and work.

In the same way that Mode 1 research practices have chiefly been owned by and situated within universities (Gibbons, 1997) which traditionally have determined what counts as new knowledge, so too have curriculum practices been situated in and determined by universities. While this might be true for established universities, the findings of this study indicate that both research approaches and curriculum practices in a UoT, and formerly in technikons, operate with a different set of assumptions and values. Gibbons (2000) suggests that Mode 1 practices are deeply entrenched within universities which traditionally have determined what counts as knowledge and whose teaching and learning practices<sup>47</sup> have been guided by a scientific paradigm and tightly bound within the world of academia. In Chapter Three, Section Four I discussed how the global trend towards marketisation and managerialism is challenging established university teaching, learning and research practices.

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<sup>47</sup> Teaching and learning is used as a holistic term that encompasses curriculum as an integral part of the design of teaching and learning experiences.

For UoTs the challenges are different. A comparison reveals that the history and purpose of technikons created a set of assumptions and practices that included regulation and bureaucracy, rather than academic autonomy and independence. Teaching staff have traditionally been drawn from industry which has impacted upon pedagogical expertise, although the staff profile is beginning to change as more academics are being drawn into the institutions. The evidence in this chapter has shown the value that participants place upon their professions, their perception that their links with industry are close and their inclusion of industry stakeholders within the curriculum development process. Most significantly, UoTs do not have a long or prolific research history and have not traditionally focussed on intellectual inquiry for the advancement of disciplinary knowledge:

*we are not a research university and I don't think we even aspire to become one...we might aspire in 20 years to be...but we are not (P2);*

*I mean all of us would like to get our masters<sup>48</sup> in the next three years you know...but then again the issue of curriculum needs to be sorted out...it's good to have your masters but what...what are you putting into your curriculum that needs to change (P1).*

As Winberg observes: 'The practices of a strong academic culture in which academics read authoritative literature from a multiplicity of sources, engage in the rational critical analysis of disciplinary theory, evaluate assumptions, and question ideas and claims, engage in the practices of academic peer review, conduct seminars on their current research, and so on, still do not play a significant part in technikon culture' (2005 p.194).

Firstly, students attending technikons were seldom introduced to research, 'the idea of students doing their own research on a particular project or topic was not in the

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<sup>48</sup> 'Of the 41 383 academics staff employed in the public institutions in 2007, 6 806 had doctoral degrees (16%) and 14 033 had master's degrees (34%). This means that 66% of academic staff are qualified to a level lower than master's. The qualifications of academic staff have improved slightly since 2004 when 14% had doctoral degrees and 30% had master's degrees. The more highly qualified people are unevenly distributed across the system. Around 8% of staff at Universities of Technology have doctorates; at comprehensive universities, the figure is 12% and at universities, 21%. Comprehensive institutions have the highest proportion of staff qualified to a level lower than master's; 75% of their staff fall into this category. At universities of technology, it is 73% and at universities, 60%' (CHE, 2009 p.73).

technikon paradigm. Students would be told what they needed to know in the lecture hall, the workshop, the laboratory, or the workplace' (Winberg, 2005 p.192). Elementary research has recently been introduced within some under-graduate programmes and with only a small minority of learners advancing into post-graduate programmes, teaching commitments remain the focus of academic practice. Regarding their own research endeavours, the data suggests that while the staff acknowledged that research should play a more important role in their academic lives, their workloads were already too heavy to accommodate more work. Participant Nine echoed the view of several participants who expressed the difficulty they were having with the demands placed on them to conduct research:

*I think the expectation that you are this person who does your teaching work plus you do community outreach and research, I mean where's the time?...you need to have like three bodies to do all of this um so ja, and I think it's a serious problem now (P9).*

As discussed in Chapter Three, key values for those who operate within the Mode 1 tradition are discipline advancement and the importance of peer acknowledgement. There is a certain amount of gate-keeping that takes place with strict rules about what constitutes 'good' science and who is allowed to practise it (Gibbons, 2000). While there are pockets of researchers within UoTs who align themselves with the assumptions and values underpinning Mode 1 practices, the academic qualifications of UoT academics have historically been significantly lower than those of academics working in universities. While there has been a concerted drive to provide increased support for and focus on the improvement of existing staff qualifications, the staff interviewed for this study might reflect a profile that is fairly typical: one of these participants had a Doctoral degree at the time of the interview, while three did not yet have Masters degrees. Only one of the participants had ever produced any accredited research output, most of the participants were studying and their focus was upon improving their own discipline-based qualifications. There can be little doubt that the level of staff qualifications impacts the depth of their disciplinary knowledge and confidence.



Although there have been structural changes within DUT, which research suggests are important for curriculum planning (Becher & Trowler, 2001; Muller, 2008), taking a purely structural approach to looking at disciplines by examining the 'variation in how academic institutions elect to draw the map of knowledge' (Becher & Trowler, 2001 p.42) can be misguided. If we take this approach and explore the combinations and distinctions the institution makes in the organisation of disciplines and clusters or groupings of disciplines and sub-disciplines, we might be tempted to draw conclusions about what the organisational shape of the institution suggests about the connections and distinctions between and within disciplines. My own sense is that this view does not necessarily compute. As an example, we can consider the recent faculty restructuring within DUT which involved the merging of discipline-based departments, such as Child and Youth Care, Community Nursing and Environmental Health, to form 'macro-departments' with a single departmental head. These macro-departments thus comprise learning programmes from related fields. One of the articulated aims of this initiative was to provide academics with opportunities to work together, to find commonalities across programmes, to share expertise and resources and to encourage inter-disciplinary curriculum and teaching collaboration. However, as seen earlier in this chapter, while some individuals have sought to bridge the boundaries between disciplines these efforts have generally been unsuccessful. All indications thus far are that despite the structural changes, academic work continues to be discipline-based and there is very little collaboration across disciplines within macro-departments. This is confirmed by one participant who expressed his opinion about the boundaries that exist between subjects and disciplines: *'Silo...We're still in silos...silos in disciplines...it's absolute bullshit...'* (P2).

What seems to be evidenced in this study is that the participants enjoyed close cognitive and social connections with colleagues within their own disciplines which 'are given tangible form and defined boundaries in the basic units or departments of universities and their role in the shaping and the substance of academic identities is there reinforced' (Henkel, 2005 p.158). Despite global trends and national education policy pushing institutions towards offering programme-based curricula that are modularised and interdisciplinary, what is revealed in the data is the relationship

between knowledge and identity discourses. The study participants identified with and shared certain attitudes, ways of behaving and epistemological values with other members of their own academic communities. These discipline-identities are deeply entrenched and thus not easily influenced by external discourses and values. In the case of these participants, their discipline-identities were closely related to their professional or industry-identities.

With their industry and community connections, UoTs are well placed to take advantage of the shift towards Mode 2 practices. There would seem to be so much synergy between the assumptions and values underpinning Mode 2 practice, and the application-orientation that characterises UoT education. Although UoTs have traditionally acknowledged the institution as only one site of knowledge, it would be misguided to believe that UoTs are adopting the 'cognitive and social practices' (Gibbons, 1997 p.3) of Mode 2 knowledge production. The data collected for this study reflects views of knowledge and approaches to teaching and learning that are not aligned with the assumptions of Mode 2 knowledge construction. We have seen the strong disciplinary boundaries that continue to exist despite structural changes and despite their allegiance to and participation in practices which they believed to be shared by industry, many of the participants seemed to be out of touch with changes and advancements that have taken place in industry and commerce. Their practices remained largely unchanged and their silences around international shifts and the impact that changes eg., globalisation, have had on knowledge production were profound. What this means is that despite their perceptions that they are meeting the needs of industry, there is evidence that their worldview remains narrow and that their practices are no longer meeting industry needs (Winberg, 2005).

The need for responsiveness and flexibility that is a key feature of Mode 2 practice has not been supported by institutional structures and procedures. I have discussed the laborious and complex bureaucracy that has accompanied the approval of new programmes and changes to existing programmes and has mitigated against fast response times. While to some extent these systems and structures have been simplified with the demise of SERTEC and the abolition of convenorship, they have been replaced by other processes, such as those of SAQA and the HEQC, that

continue to impede response times and programme flexibility and to perpetuate Mode 1 practices (Gibbons, 2000). The data has also shown that opportunities to create inter-and trans-disciplinary curricula (where appropriate) have not been supported by the institutional culture and narrow conceptualisations of curriculum have persisted, with existing qualifications 'simply rewritten in compliance with the different permutations of unit standards or outcomes statements required at various times by the Department of Education and its statutory committees' (Winberg, 2005 p.193).

Rather than aligning with the trans-disciplinary practices that characterise Mode 2 knowledge construction, we have seen the establishment of centres outside of faculty boundaries to accommodate technology transfer and to forge partnerships with industry. Within DUT, the Centre for Skills Development and Technology Transfer (CSDTT) was launched for this purpose, and the Business Studies Unit forged close links with industry, often providing on-site training and courses especially designed for meeting the needs of particular business organisations, all separate from the programme offerings and the academic departments of the institution. Gibbons (1997) maintains that this approach to entrepreneurial practice is not in tune with Mode 2 thinking which advocates the establishment and incorporation of inter-and trans-disciplinary practices as central to the institution's academic practices. What we have seen instead is that Ensor's (2002) claim that curricula have remained largely unchanged, seems to be confirmed by the data in this study. Despite the fact that UoTs, unlike universities, have always offered programme-based courses and have been focussed on preparing students for specific vocations, the boundaries between subjects offered within these programmes stand firm and discrete subjects continue to exist.

Whereas many of these participants demonstrated confidence in their professional engagement and their ability to meet industry needs, there were significant silences around pedagogical issues. This finding supports Winberg's view that '[i]t would be an understatement to say that there has been a shortage of pedagogical expertise in the development of technikon curricula' (2005 p.192). The lack of engagement around pedagogy seems to indicate that despite their familiarity with the training

discourses of industry, the participants (with a couple of exceptions) were not engaged in reflective practices necessary to shift modes of knowledge production and transform curricula in ways that would benefit students, industry, the institution and ultimately the social and economic transformation agenda of the country.

One of the concerns about this strong professional commitment is that curriculum design is driven by industry needs and that this focus sometimes undermines academic quality. Until recently, the work-based learning apprenticeships undertaken by students within many programmes had not been curriculated and student assessments undertaken in the workplace were seldom prepared, conducted or moderated with the same academic rigour as those conducted at the institution. This is borne out by Participant Two's comments:

*Co-operative education<sup>49</sup> is a curriculum issue...it's not curriculated...it's six months in industry pouring the tea or photocopying, doing what you like...you don't at the end of it write an academic report or you don't do a study or...oh please, man no wonder the university people say it's not a three year diploma...it's a two year diploma...when are they going to confront...how can they be so stupid? (P2).*

Winberg claims that 'despite the role they claim to play in workforce development, technikons have shied away from researching the world of work' and she cites the absence of discussion about the theory of work-based learning (2005 p.197). What seems to be revealed in the data is that a strong professional identity does not necessarily translate into curriculum practice that prepares learners for the technological advancements and developments, and the current ways of working in the world.

The findings in this study have shown that in an institution such as DUT, with its history rooted in the technikon movement and its recent instability, there has been little intellectual engagement with current policy and broad issues related to

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<sup>49</sup> Co-operative Education refers to the connections between industry and UoTs and included experiential learning which is now referred to as Work-integrated Learning (WIL), where students spend time working in industry.

curriculum planning. Furthermore, 'the norms and values of UoTs, as manifested in discipline-specific practices, purport to be industry or technically based, rather than based on the academic practices of a traditional university' (McKenna & Sutherland, 2006 p.16). We have seen throughout this chapter, the participants emphasising their responsibility towards providing training for industry:

*we are an institution that's vocational...our training is basically aimed at preparing people for a specific career path so we're not a general B.A, B.Sc... (P2).*

The danger for UoTs of this perception is these 'training discourses can hold UoTs captive and if such discourses take on the status of "common sense", then UoTs may find it difficult to argue for space in the curriculum to develop higher order critical practices' (McKenna & Sutherland, 2006 p.16).

The final section of this chapter will consider in more detail the skills discourses evident in the data and what they reveal about the participants' approaches to knowledge construction and the nature of their curriculum engagement. The section will also consider the extent to which they are preparing learners to function responsibly within a developing society as well as critically within a complex global market that requires its workers to be flexible and adaptable.

### **7.2.2 Knowledge as skills**

Within South Africa there is evidence that the call for higher education to be more responsive to 'pressing economic imperatives' has led to the surfacing of a more powerful training or skills discourse (McKenna & Sutherland, 2006 p.17). With their position as providers of technical higher education, UoTs in particular are ideally placed to take advantage of the need for high skills that has emerged. However, evidence in the data suggests that current practices require significant shifts if they are to fulfil their role. My understanding of high skills is based on Green and Sakamoto's definition which describes a high skills economy as one with 'a wide distribution of workforce skills where these are fully utilised to achieve high productivity across a wide range of sectors, at the same time producing high wage rates and relative income equality'. The high skills model includes the importance of 'workforce co-operation supported by civic trust and social capital' (2001 p.64).

Badroodien states that 'issues of economic growth and the development of high level skills have always been absent features in the story of technical and industrial education provision in South Africa' (2004 p.44) and cautions that overturning the low skill levels of South African workers will to some extent be limited and constrained by our history. Lower level skills training that characterises some of the practices within technikons includes repetition, a focus on procedure and development of hands-on skills.

Less evident are sound theoretical principles upon which their skills are based and critical reflection that fosters inquiry and adaptability in the face of advancements. In these findings we have seen much evidence of industry-related discourses suggesting that the most important element of technikon (and now UoT) education is to provide what industry wants. More evidence follows in these two extracts from the data:

*we've always done this the way we do it, you know, you learn a skill and you get tested in that skill (P10);*

*we still have to keep the practical component, it's a reality, it's making them to be more...in terms of job entrance, skills etc, from the skills aspect it's very, very huge, and every time you talk to the managers they tell you their needs, so we have to answer to them and most of them are practically orientated rather than theoretically orientated (P11).*

The argument being made here and most often made in support of the industry-related approach is that employers prefer technikon students to university students as they are 'hands-on' and can 'do' things. This is reflected in the view of one participant who stated: *'there's no use your doing a certain subject and you're not going to use it in industry'* (P6). With the current focus on market responsiveness as well as the history of the technikon movement, including its excessive bureaucracy, it is unsurprising that issues of knowledge construction were absent in participant conversations and in many cases the curriculum approach adopted seemed more technicist than transformatory. Given the relationship between UoTs and industry, the current focus on market responsiveness and the academics' lack of pedagogical engagement, one of the possibilities has always been that training would become 'technicist rather than technical, thus ensuring a workforce that is noncritical and

incapable of self-development' (McKenna & Sutherland, 2006 p.21). While UoTs have historically valued their relationships with industry, the increased focus on the commercialisation of knowledge puts them at risk of becoming more focused on adapting their curricula towards selling skills to the market at the expense of providing high-level technological education. Winberg et al., however, claim that '[a]cademics and employers need to accept that there are necessary differences between the two fields, and that there are practices, pedagogies and structures that might enable or constrain attempts to integrate learning at these two sites' (2006 p.vii).

In my conversations with participants, some expressed concern that their curricula were too skills-based and were not changing to meet shifting demands:

*we need to be more critical because we've kind of – in the past have been teaching people to do a job, but we haven't been teaching them to think about the way they do their job, and so we need to be more critical because I think that's where your research comes from – is being that critical thinker, so maybe you're not going to find them too much in the technical side where they're just doing (P10);*

*I think we're kind of still a little bit stuck in the technical...um, so I think we're kind of battling to move out of that, away from the technical to get towards that emancipatory (P10).*

Notwithstanding this awareness among one or two participants of the need for encouraging knowledge-based practice, descriptions of their curriculum, teaching and learning practices illustrated that the approach taken by many participants leaned towards traditional, discipline-specific skill development. There was a focus on procedure rather than principle, reminding us of the view that the 'transfer of technical skills can be at the expense of higher order skills that are coupled with knowledge construction and understanding' (McKenna & Sutherland, 2006 p.15), as seen in the following extract from the data: *'if a student does not do too well in his test it does not mean he cannot produce a photograph in terms of what you ask for' (P1).*

The participants' focus on providing learners with skills for the labour market seemed at times to detract from their broader role which is to provide learners with the capacity to think critically, to adapt to change, both in the workplace and society, and to generate new knowledge. The participants' narrow focus on skills acquisition is evident in the following quote:

*I always got to think about my other role as a photographer as well. I must not be guided purely by academia. I also need to be guided by what my role as a photographer, what outcomes as a photographer do I need? (P1).*

There was also evidence of low skills training discourses such as: '*our training is basically aimed at preparing people for a specific career path...*' (P2). In a university, albeit a UoT, curriculum design should include opportunities for the development of critical and creative thought, so that learners can live and work independently and innovatively. The demand for skilled labour, however important, 'should not result in the development of a skilled labour force that is unable to meet the need for the advancement of knowledge' (McKenna & Sutherland, 2006 p.17). Badat states that the knowledge produced and disseminated within a university should advance 'our understanding of our natural and social worlds'. He also states that a university encourages students to think effectively and critically and to achieve depth in some field of knowledge (2006 p.7). This is a significant challenge in an institution where, according to Participant Seven:

*you have a person [staff member] who got his own qualification here [at the institution where he is teaching], he hasn't seen anything else, how do you want him to challenge his students, how do you want him to challenge anything? (P7).*

With reference to Winberg's (2005) chronotypes of technical higher education (described in Chapter Three), in this analysis we have seen evidence of her observation that 'for many current university of technology staff the worldviews embodied in the first chronotype [educating for the needs of industry] are likely to be more familiar and less counterintuitive than the worldviews embodied in later ones' (2005 p.191). Despite the structural changes that have accompanied the UoTs efforts to imitate the universities (Winberg, 2005), we have not seen evidence of significantly changed curriculum practices. Participants in this study seem to be



aware that more is required of their programmes and practices if they are to develop independent and critical thinkers:

*when I hear the word 'university', I think of something at a higher level with more critical thinking – slightly more than what we've had at the technikon* (P10).

Yet despite this awareness and the recent efforts of the institution's management team to engage with academics on issues around technological education and what this means for their practice, at the time when this research was conducted the data revealed that curriculum, teaching and learning discourses appeared to be largely unchanged.

Kraak reminds us that we are witnessing the dawn of the 'knowledge' or 'informational economy', which has brought with it new demands for education and training, including 'the need for a highly skilled labour force able to employ the new technologies and able to add value to goods and services produced through continuous innovation' (1997 p.53). He also points out that we need to respond and adapt with more flexibility in order to ensure that our labour forces are skilled enough to adapt to changes (Kraak, 1997). In our world where advancements and changes are frequent, 'career education cannot provide sufficient knowledge to suffice for a substantial portion of a lifelong career' (McKenna & Sutherland, 2006 p.22). The development of curricula that will equip learners for the world of work in ways that are academically substantive and rigorous, presents one of the most significant challenges to UoTs. With regard to this, Participant One stated with concern that: '*to convince the mindset to change is a very difficult thing because people have been here for twenty years*' (P1).

The discourse of knowledge as skills has the power to preclude other understandings of knowledge as problem-solving. The provision of technical higher education for industry does not discount the need for 'rigorous training and specialization in a discipline or community of inquirers, within which the focus, theoretical base, methodologies and epistemic criteria have been developed' (Henkel, 2004 p.175). Within the context of huge shifts in national economic and societal imperatives, the knowledge explosion, and the relationship between society,

technical higher education and the marketplace the current curriculum design approaches need to change.

### **7.3 Conclusion**

We have emerged from an apartheid system where knowledge was considered to be stable, discipline boundaries were tight, and change was discouraged. The data revealed that narrow discourses of knowledge are still evident and that these impact upon curriculum construction.

That curriculum transformation is necessary for meeting the needs of a new democracy finding its feet in a world of fast-paced technological advancements in which modes of knowledge production are changing in response to globalisation, is undeniable. This transformation will require the shedding of vested interests and the collapsing and/or redefining of long-established 'sacred' boundaries and hierarchies between disciplines and subjects. In order to make the shifts required, academics will require pedagogical expertise, intense scrutiny of and reflection upon current practices, research into industry advancements and technological developments, sound theoretical disciplinary knowledge and an understanding of who their students are.

This analysis has also given a glimpse into the multi-layered and dynamic complexities of implementing change and innovation within an organisation. It has revealed the overlap of knowledge discourses with those of change and identity, and has shown that both affective and cognitive factors are important for changing academic practice. The sense of self-worth and value achieved through workgroup connections and relationships, the existence of sets of assumptions and established practices, the ways of constructing knowledge, understandings about teaching and learning, the flow of power relations, (adapted from Trowler, 2008) are all factors that contribute towards or mitigate against change-readiness and impact upon the likelihood of successful change. It would be best not to under-estimate the significant shifts in consciousness that the implementation of meaningful curriculum transformation will require of academic staff.

A summary of these findings is included in Chapter Eight in which I have also focused briefly on some possible strategies for improving the possibility of implementing successful curriculum transformation.

## **Chapter Eight: Summary of findings and implications for curriculum change**

### **8.1 Introduction**

Having undertaken this research during a time of transition for South African higher education clearly has implications for the findings of the study. It seems evident that the many shifts in the higher education and training landscape, not only as a result of the changed South African education system, but also as a result of global trends, including changes in modes of knowledge production and fast-moving technological developments, are requiring significant shifts in the academic identities of those working in UoTs. We have seen that changes in workplace requirements, higher education (particularly university) practice and student needs are placing pressure on dominant curriculum, teaching and learning practices that were for many years successful in meeting the needs of industry (Winberg, 2005).

### **8.2 Summary of the research process**

In this critical investigation into curriculum development discourses of academic staff at a South African University of Technology, I have focussed not only on how these academics are positioned in relation to curriculum reform, but also on understanding the factors that might account for these positions. The research approach attempts to provide a coherent picture of the relationship between context and change and the importance of support and capacity for the implementation of curriculum change. In its exploration of capacity, the study also looks at approaches to knowledge construction and assumptions about learning. The premise underpinning this research is that curriculum is socially constructed and that curriculum change is inextricably linked with and impacted by the environment in which it is being implemented. While I have focussed specifically on the educational and professional environment within which the academics work, I do acknowledge that there are many other socio-cultural influences that have a part to play in the capacity of individuals to effect change.

In Chapter Two which forms the background to my study, I contextualised the study by providing an historical overview of developments in South African education, specifically within the higher education sector. Included in this chapter was also a

brief historical overview of the South African technikon movement which has a unique history and particular characteristics that differentiate it from other providers within the higher education sector. My purpose in providing this overview was not only to situate the study within its broad macro-level context but also to provide a platform for understanding some of the possible influences upon the curriculum discourses of academics. Given the inequities of the education system prior to 1994 and the competing and contradictory national discourses currently at play, it was not surprising that the data analysis revealed confusion, frustration and more than a little resentment regarding the current curriculum change expectations. Further to this, the history of the technikon movement with its roots in technical training and its complex bureaucracy was also shown to have had an influence upon the teaching and learning assumptions and curriculum practices of the study participants. Moving towards the present, Chapter Two outlined current institutional challenges including the merger that took place in 2002 as well as the reclassification of the technikon to a university of technology, both of which were shown to have had a profound impact on those who participated in this study as will be further discussed in the summary of findings.

The literature discussed in Chapter Three was intended to provide insight into the theoretical underpinnings for this study. In the discussion on curriculum paradigms I was guided by the ideas of theorists who have been influential in establishing and developing particular schools of thought and ways of understanding educational practice. My intention was also to make my own curriculum assumptions explicit to provide insight into the understandings guiding my research approach and design. In line with the socio-cultural approach adopted here, Chapter Three also included a review of international studies relating to academic identity and the socio-cultural factors that play a role in the construction and maintenance of academic identities. The literature revealed that the strength and stability of academic identities are strongly associated with academics' membership of university and disciplinary communities (Henkel, 2004). Particular attention was paid to the importance of understanding the assumptions, values and practices underpinning institutional and workgroup cultures and their influence upon the change positions of individuals.

Chapter Three also discussed the ways that many traditional universities have resisted being driven towards inter-disciplinary programme-based curriculum, with 'attempts to break down disciplinary boundaries, especially with subjects that have robust disciplinary identities' resulting in 'disciplinary enclaves within the programmes, rather than in integrated programmes' (Muller, 2005 pp.95-6). My sense was that the responses of (traditional) university academics largely come out of a strong aversion to what is perceived as a challenge to the stability that academics have traditionally been afforded and an invasion of their academic autonomy. This university defence of academic autonomy and the resistance to the imposition of national structures and processes perceived to be regulatory and invasive was seen to be absent in the responses of the UoT participants in this study and suggests that the culture of compliance is already established. This is discussed further in the summary of findings that follows.

The literature around knowledge production pointed to the ongoing debate about the emerging Mode 2 paradigm of knowledge production (Gibbons, 1997), suggesting that factors such as globalisation, marketisation and managerialism are challenging established university knowledge production practices and encouraging them to explore new and varied ways of constructing knowledge. The summary of these research findings describes what the data would reveal about the respondents' notions of knowledge construction and the degree to which their thinking is aligned with Mode 1 and/or Mode 2 knowledge practices.

### **8.3 Summary of findings**

This exploration of academics' curriculum discourses within a UoT has taken into account the ways that international, national and institutional changes have impacted upon the academic identities of staff and have challenged current practices. What seemed clear within the data was that curriculum change cannot be looked at independently of other change as wider change processes play a significant role in the capacity of individuals to effect change. Another finding that emerged through the data was that agency alone will not necessarily result in successful change implementation. In the sections that follow I will briefly summarise some of the other significant findings that have emerged.

### **8.3.1 *Change discourses***

As has been widely discussed in this study, there have been significant international shifts, including globalisation and marketisation that have impacted on and challenged established institutional practices and the identities of academics. The findings of this study revealed very little engagement with macro-level issues and more focus on the everyday issues impacting on institutional life and impacting on their morale and their ability to do their work. One suggestion is that this lack of engagement could be partly attributed to the absence of an established research tradition aimed at advancing disciplinary knowledge and applying cutting-edge technological development. The trend towards managerialism discussed in Chapter Three was shown in the findings to be manifested in the focus on financial viability, the efficiency audits, and the increased administrative burden on academics. It was also manifest in the deflection of attention from the core business of teaching registered students to the development of short courses designed to bring in additional income. In the exploration of the impact of these macro-level challenges on modes of knowledge construction and production there were some interesting findings that are discussed later in the findings.

As discussed in Chapter Two, the introduction of the NQF and the establishment of an outcomes-based education system were accompanied by a number of structures and mechanisms intended to guide and facilitate their implementation. What these findings illustrate is that current teaching and learning practice (including curriculum) is not aligned with the assumptions underpinning an outcomes-based approach. There is evidence that that input-based pedagogy remains dominant and that the implementation of outcomes-based approaches remain largely limited to regulatory compliance. This is in spite of changing industry needs based on fast-paced technological advancements and a student population with needs that have changed significantly over the last ten years.

Logically one would think that the compulsory training of higher education teachers would 'lead to conceptual and behavioural change among them' (Trowler & Bamber, 2005 p.82) and would result in those teachers doing a better job than untrained teachers. However, the issue is a complex one. Trowler and Bamber claim that

education programmes should focus less on the training of individual academics and 'take more cognisance of disciplinary issues and differences', allowing members of departments and faculties to help in the shaping of provision. They reason that an individual's departmental, disciplinary and institutional context can constrain practices, as 'local departmental and workgroup cultures are powerful, operate against innovation, and hinder the transfer of trainee lecturers' learning back into their departments' (2005 p.83). By using the approach of involving faculty members, more synergy would be created between the 'practices and approaches advocated in training courses and the attitudes, values and practices in departments' (Trowler & Bamber, 2005 p.84). It seems that depending on individual change to lead to systemic change 'exaggerates the power of agency over that of structure, seeing individual actors as the prime movers and shakers in social change' (Trowler & Bamber, 2005 p.80).

### **8.3.2 Institutional culture/s**

What emerges in the findings is that the study participants seemed not to identify strongly with the institution which was seen by many to be dysfunctional and badly-managed. Despite this lack of identification, it was evident that the institutional culture had a profound effect upon their curriculum change responses, and that the significance and influence of the prevailing institutional culture/s cannot be underestimated. As discussed in the analysis, they are uncertain about their roles and responsibilities within the institution as it now stands, feeling under-valued by the institutional leaders and over-burdened in their workloads with limited support and resources. What we thus saw was that the participants' opinions about the institutional culture resembled very closely Scott et al.'s (2008) research findings about the characteristics of a university that is unsupportive of effective change management. These included their lack of clarity about the direction that the institution was taking, the reactive decision-making and lack of efficient planning, the slow response of senior management to the inadequate physical conditions within which many of them were working. It was also evident that the participants felt under-valued and frustrated by the increasing administrative burden placed upon them, and most significantly that they were 'cynical, uninterested or negative about the institution' (Scott et al., 2008 pp.137-8).



The low morale, despondency and dissatisfaction that came through so clearly in the participants' responses were largely attributed to issues around institutional management. They were clearly impacted by the institutional merger which had turned the institution into a site of conflict and uncertainty in which the underlying assumptions, values and practices were not familiar to them. As the findings show, the reclassification of the technikon as a UoT further affected the participants' sense of security and created more uncertainty about their purpose and academic identity. It would thus seem to me that these academics for the most part seem to identify with a set of institutional values and practices that are no longer valued by broader socio-politico-economic forces.

### **8.3.3 Agency**

The issue of individual agency as reflected in the findings demonstrates that there was a continuum of participant agency that seemed to be closely related to the strength and stability of the participants' academic identities. Although I am not suggesting that other factors don't contribute to positions of agency, there seems to be a case for suggesting that those participants whose departmental workgroups had fallen apart; whose departmental structure and membership had significantly changed; who felt insecure about their own position within the institution; and were linked with industries without professional bodies<sup>50</sup> (where applicable) were less inclined to adopt an agentic position. Instead they exhibited tendencies towards assigning blame to others, lacking insight into problem areas in their programmes and attributing negative change responses to factors 'beyond their control', avoiding engagement with change processes, and exhibiting impatience with or not acknowledging the challenges faced by learners.

On the other hand, the findings suggest that the more agentic participants who were responsive to the notion of change; exhibited confidence in their ability to effect change, were more empathetic to their learners. As was discussed in the analysis

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<sup>50</sup> Only recognised professions, such as those in the health sector (e.g. nursing, biotechnology, biomedical technology, radiography, emergency medical services, chiropractics, engineering, accounting etc) have statutory professional bodies. Although some other sectors do have stakeholder bodies, there are those who rely on their contacts with particular people working in their industry and/or identify others who might be interested in engaging with them.

and is referred to in the next section, there seemed to be a relationship between the level of agency and the amount of stability and value gained from their allegiance to and participation in workgroups.

#### **8.3.4 The importance of workgroups**

While the findings show that workgroups as discussed in Chapter Three play an important part in the lives of these academics, they also suggest that in the absence of strong academic leadership, these workgroups have even more value in impacting on stability and influencing the agency of individuals (Trowler, 2008). We saw that in cases where workgroups had disintegrated or where the values and assumptions underpinning existing workgroups had shifted after the recruitment of new members, there was a negative impact on the affected individuals. There was some indication that the nature of workgroups was also influential in the more agentic positions adopted by some participants. Those whose workgroups seemed more open to change and less restricted by tightly-held assumptions, values and practices exhibited more willingness to effect change. Another factor that impacted on agency seemed to be the amount of status the participant attributed to a particular workgroup, and the value they placed upon their membership within the group. In the case of several participants they clearly viewed the cultures within their departmental workgroups as central to a sense of well-being. This confirms Knight and Trowler's finding that departmental workgroups are 'usually the main activity system for most academic staff' (2000 p.69).

For many of these academics, what seems to be their defining community is their profession and the department within which they work and which 'provides the language in which individuals understand themselves and interpret their world' (Henkel, 2004 p.169). Through their own training, their experience and interactions with industry, these individuals have learnt 'not only a language but a way of understanding the world, through the ideas, cognitive structures and experience expressed in that language' (Henkel, 2004 p.169).

The findings thus suggest that these workgroups include not only strong associations with their departmental groups but also with their professions and industry

communities, in some cases demonstrating curriculum discourses that were aligned with narrow training and skills discourses usually found in workplace training environments. The findings regarding these knowledge discourses are discussed in more detail in the following sections of this summary.

### ***8.3.5 Knowledge construction***

In the reading for this study, I drew widely from the work of Gibbons et al. (1994) on changing modes of knowledge production, and was particularly interested in what the data would uncover about dominant modes of knowledge production and dissemination as reflected in the participants' responses. What these findings show is that the dominant view of knowledge displayed by these UoT study participants, with a couple of exceptions, was not aligned with either Mode 1 or Mode 2 knowledge generation practices. With a history of providing industry-oriented technical education, largely at under-graduate level, there has not been a strong research tradition or a focus on intellectual inquiry for the advancement of disciplinary knowledge that would align with Mode 1 values and practices.

An analysis of the academics' discourses about knowledge ownership revealed little engagement with issues of knowledge production and dissemination and limited insight into their own practice. I would suggest that one of the single biggest contributors towards the outdated curriculum practices is the lack of research culture within the institution. Although as previously mentioned, this does appear to be changing, at the time when this research was conducted there was little sign that research was a priority for the majority of the study participants. This goes a long way towards explaining the lack of synergy between current curriculum and workplace needs. A focus on research brings with it a confidence that one is up-to-date with current trends and developments within one's field of study. One develops the language of academia, reads widely, learns ways of investigating problems rigorously, becomes used to supporting arguments with evidence, and develops stronger connections with one's discipline. Without this focus, I would argue that teaching staff lack the self-assurance and capacity to use the discourse of the discipline in ways that reflect their knowledge of their field. If their own experience of their discipline is based on their own early studies and their past experience, it

makes sense that they would be resistant to engaging with the curriculum. The demand to review and transform curricula would quite naturally be met with a certain amount of anxiety and trepidation, as their lack of familiarity with current trends, methods and developments would to some degree necessitate that they defend their existing curricula and stay within their comfort zone.

The findings also indicate that a traditional view of knowledge construction exists that is conventional and does not adequately reflect the shifting demands of the education sector, learners and the workplace. There seems also not to have been a significant shift from educator-centred pedagogic practices, informed by discourses that privilege the knowledge and position of the lecturer at the expense of students who do not participate in the construction of curricula and are not considered capable of contributing to the production of knowledge.

With the challenges presented not only by the need for economic and social transformation within South Africa, but also by the need to respond to fast-paced technological and knowledge advancements, it is clear that our approach towards curriculum development should be visionary and responsive, and should explore new modes of knowledge construction. Despite the many good intentions, current inwardly-focused, narrow practices seem to inhibit rather than enable curriculum transformation.

The history of industry connections and inclusion of industry stakeholders in the development and review of curriculum might create an expectation that UoTs are ideally placed to make the shift towards Mode 2 practices. However, the evidence in this study suggests that current practices including the structural inflexibility of programmes, the slow response to change and the lack of insight into changing industry needs are deeply entrenched and unlikely to shift without exceptional leadership and improved capacity.

### ***8.3.6 Traditional curriculum discourses***

Chapters Two and Three included discussions about the influence of the complex bureaucratic technikon system, including the practice of convenorship, on curriculum

processes and I was interested in exploring how the participants experienced these issues and what they meant for curriculum change. The findings reveal that across the agency-continuum, participants have been significantly impacted by these engaged with curriculum issues at a superficial level without the depth and reflection required to interrogate the existing shape and structure of the curriculum within the changed context. Established institutional curriculum practices continue to dominate, with curricula remaining strongly framed (Bernstein, 2000) and resembling a school syllabus. The shallow approach amounts to a largely compliant and technicist approach that does not challenge the status quo by including fundamental curriculum changes that speak to current industry needs and changed teaching and learning approaches leading to the development of learners with improved critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

### ***8.3.7 Industry focus***

As mentioned in a previous section, the findings show that the participants are highly invested in their relationships with industry. Although the profile of academics is shifting to include more university trained staff members, there remains a strong industry affinity. This long-established institutional culture of industry affinity is reflected in the views of participants. However, their responses seem also to reflect rising tensions between these existing assumptions and values, and those that are emerging out of national education developments. Whereas the participants are accustomed to the familiarity and stability provided by their professions, they are being pressured to meet institutional and national education requirements that many do not fully understand and which do not always seem aligned with their industry-aligned practices. Nor are they necessarily convinced that complying with these requirements will enhance the quality of their programmes or improve their service to industry.

Despite the value that these participants placed on their connections with industry, there is evidence in the data to suggest that (with exceptions) they are not in touch with technological developments and changed workplace practices. Notwithstanding the acknowledgement by many participants of the need for changed practices for improving the quality of learning within a UoT, the findings reveal that curriculum

practices were predominantly bound by a worldview that was more suited to the development and implementation of curricula aligned with outdated educational and workplace practices.

### **8.3.8 Skills discourses**

In the data analysis I explored the extent to which these participants were cognisant of the emerging need for high skills within industry. The findings reveal that some participants demonstrated an awareness that the balance between theoretical knowledge and skills development was uneven and that their curricula leaned too strongly towards the development of practical skills. However, the responses of most participants reflected low skills training discourses that included a narrow focus on skills acquisition, showing again a lack of awareness around shifts in industry needs and changing workplace practices. There was an absence of transformative discourses recognising the importance of providing opportunities for learners to develop critical and creative thought.

### **8.3.9 Academic autonomy**

In contrast to university responses to the external regulatory processes, these findings showed a lack of concern among participants around issues of academic autonomy that have been widely debated within the university sector. While the value of quality monitoring and evaluation was recognised by the respondents, there was a lack of evidence to support the view that the new quality structures were useful in facilitating change. Instead a commonly held view was that the quality structures and mechanisms were bureaucratic and administratively cumbersome, adding to an already over-loaded administrative burden.

Related to the participant responses to the establishment of new external and internal quality structures and processes, the findings suggest that academic freedom was not necessarily highly valued by the majority of these participants as reflected in their apparent lack of concern about policies and procedures impinging on or interfering with their academic freedom, and their compliance with bureaucratic institutional requirements. There seemed to be no sense that they could lay claim to their academic autonomy and their responses revealed that those UoT participants

who expressed their aversion to the new national and institutional change discourses were responding out of uncertainty and lack of confidence, rather than out of a strong sense of academic identity or in defence of their academic autonomy. To some degree this can be attributed to factors discussed in Chapters Two and Three, which include the history of technikons and the reasons for their existence, the highly bureaucratised ex-technikon system out of which this UoT emerged and the assumptions, values underpinning the institutional, faculty, departmental and professional environments within which they work.

Given their uncertainty about what the changes signify for their practice and without the support to make the requisite changes, it seems reasonable that these academics would hang onto practices with which they are familiar. Thus while the findings do support Henkel's view (2004) that both the discipline and institution are key communities in which individual academic identities have been formed and developed, what remains crucial to understand is that the 'versions' or interpretations of those communities with which many of these participants identify are no longer valid or valued.

Now these academics are faced with a situation where those ways of understanding the world would have to shift in order for them to align with changes to the education landscape and industry advancements. Their curriculum, teaching and learning practices are being questioned, and they are under pressure to undertake research and engage with pedagogy in ways that have never before been required of them. As if this were not enough, their discipline knowledge and understandings of workplace practices are also under review and they are being pressured to improve their qualifications.

#### **8.4 Implications and strategies for change**

There are many issues and obstacles that stand in the way of successfully transforming curricula within an institution such as this. Fullan (1996) warns that systemic reform could cause increased overload<sup>51</sup> and fragmentation<sup>52</sup>, and I would

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<sup>51</sup> Fullan (1996) describes overload as a barrier to education reform caused by the many planned and unplanned changes with which educators must constantly contend.

argue, based on the participants' responses, that this is currently happening. Academics in this institution have been faced with realities that challenge existing assumptions, values and practices, thus creating uncertainty and insecurity. The findings reflect that many of these academics expressed a sense of inadequacy in the face of all the innovations and changes that they believe are being imposed upon them. There is instability and ambivalence and there is also confusion about what these changes signify for their practice. Many academics have fairly low level professional qualifications and inadequate pedagogical expertise which impacts on their academic self-esteem.

The findings also reveal that many are having difficulty making sense of the proposed reforms which seem to them to be incoherent. These reforms are taking place amidst other significant challenges, including the institutional merger, the reclassification of the institution as a UoT, larger classes, and increased teaching, marking and administrative loads. There is also a sense that the proposed changes are overwhelming as they encompass all aspects of academic life. These are very real concerns to which academic leaders need to be sensitive. They also need to be aware of recurrent and regular patterns of behaviour that develop and become so normalised within a workgroup that they are invisible to participants in the group. I mention this as significant because in order to effect change academic leaders need an awareness of the workgroup culture and an understanding of the role that workgroups play in academics' lives. They also need to recognise that people need time for investigation, questions, debate, reflection and application (Farmer, 1990).

I support Fullan's (1993) view that it is *people* who change systems and systemic education reform only has a chance of succeeding when educators are clear about and take ownership of the proposed changes. However, even with the best intentions, without a change-capable institutional culture with academic leaders who provide support for change, the likelihood of individuals implementing changed practice that results in widespread and successful transformation is limited. While I believe it is incumbent upon academic leaders to provide their academics with

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<sup>52</sup> Fullan (1996) describes fragmentation as a barrier to education reform that occurs when the pressures for reform seem disjointed and incoherent.



support, to model and reinforce positive behaviour (Scott et al., 2008), it must be said that academics need to be developed into good leaders. If this is to happen we need to be more explicit about the role of academic leaders, and to make clear the expectations placed upon them.

Not enough attention is paid to the selection and capacity-building of academic leaders. We need to develop academic leaders who are change agents and who work to foster a change-capable institutional culture that embodies assumptions, values and practices that support change. Academic leaders have an important role to play in the promotion of improved teaching and learning (including curriculum) practices. Knight and Trowler agree that 'the role of the head, or chair, of department needs reworking and this will require improved leadership and management training for department heads' (2000 p.81). In Chapter Three I included the list of qualities and characteristics identified by Scott et al. (2008) as evident in such an institution, and it is towards these that we must aspire.

Academic leaders, such as deans and heads of department, play an important role in creating an expectation among academics that change will occur, encouraging change and supporting 'change agents' (Farmer, 1990) within the faculties. Heads of department can lead the way by understanding workgroup cultures and creating a supportive environment. They need to lead from the front, displaying behaviours that indicate their own commitment to change and encouraging the development of more coherent and relevant curricula.

The findings reveal that these academics were profoundly influenced by their institutional and departmental context, and their academic identities were similarly impacted by the institutional and departmental culture/s. At the meso-level, we saw that the participants' sense of self-worth and value achieved through workgroup connections and relationships, the existence of sets of assumptions and established practices, understandings about teaching and learning, and the flow of power relations (adapted from Trowler, 2008) were all factors that impacted upon participants' curriculum responses. What was most evident in the findings was the influence that these factors had upon the morale of the study participants. Knight and

Trowler suggest that positive cultural change is possible when the 'focus of leadership attention is at the level of the natural activity system of universities: the department or a subunit of it' (2000 p.81).

Workgroups are important for the constancy and stability that they provide for their members and workgroup members identify strongly with their colleagues. Different workgroups are underpinned by diverse values and assumptions that influence and modify behaviour. It is thus important for curriculum developers to be cognisant of the notions of teaching and learning valued by members of workgroups and to work with these groups in ways that might be challenging but that do not threaten to disrupt the security that academics find within the groups.

Another issue that I believe impacts on the development of a strong academic identity is the lack of research focus which has implications for curriculum transformation. As we saw in Chapter Three, Henkel views academic lives as those that are 'concerned with knowledge, acquiring, producing, reshaping and disseminating it, and the primary communities are knowledge communities, disciplines or subject communities' (2000 p.148). The strength of academic identity thus lies in having a common language and understanding of the world developed through the cognitive structures and ideas of the discipline within which the academic works (Henkel, 2004). The development of such an identity is to a large extent dependent upon the degree to which one is steeped in the culture and values of the discipline. One of the ways this comes about is through extensive research and study that interrogates current theory and practice, and also contributes to the discipline's body of knowledge. The added advantage of research practice is that it affords one strong membership of the academic community, opportunities to participate in collaborative projects and form links to other academics and stakeholders working in the field. What we saw reflected in the data was that many participants exhibited notions of knowledge construction and research practices that did not align them with either Mode 1 or Mode 2 thinking.

I would suggest that a strong research culture is beneficial for the confidence and expertise of academics. Given its history, it is understandable that within a university

of technology the research culture is in its infancy and that academics are still studying to improve their qualifications and further develop their expertise in their focus areas. This does, however, negatively impact on the quality of learning programmes and insights into their own practice. There is evidence of a low skills discourse and a focus on practical training that does not align with the conceptualisation of a university. The ability to provide learners with strong conceptual foundations and their confidence in their own academic identity would improve with increased research. Financial incentives alone will not account for increased research output. Support for increased research to address matters of knowledge dissemination will need to consider academic workloads. The findings suggest that academics are over-burdened with administrative duties and heavy teaching loads. The existence of school-like syllabuses, a lack of belief in the ability of learners to study independently, and the pressure to improve student success rates means that the learners are spoon-fed and that the development of critical and creative thinking is not prioritised.

Despite these academics' identification with their professions, the findings of this study show that they are not necessarily meeting the current and future needs of industry. The epistemological shifts in higher education, technological advancements in industry and changed workplace practices present significant challenges for UoT academics. My position is that any learning programme offered within a higher education institution should be designed not only to provide learners with fundamental or core learning within their chosen discipline but should also prepare them to be producers of knowledge and to be knowledge workers. This presents a major challenge to the academy as the tasks of generating 'consumers of knowledge at undergraduate level and producers of knowledge at post-graduate level' might seem contradictory to their expertise (McKenna, 2004 p.242). Geisler suggests that rather than preserving traditional modes of knowledge production which make it more inaccessible for those 'who are not born to it in apprenticeship training', it is necessary to 'open up expertise, to make it explicit and more available' (Geisler, 1994 p.88). With the increasing pace of technological advancement and shifting workplace practices, it would be beneficial for the institution to support the idea of these academics spending time in the workplace and becoming more familiar with

current trends and developments. With this support, academics would become more aware of the weaknesses within their learning programmes and more able to make changes for increased relevance, applicability and future learning.

Aside from issues relating to discipline expertise, there are also concerns about the pedagogical expertise of academics. Again, this is unsurprising and can to some degree be attributed to the legacy of apartheid and the history of the technikon movement. Many academics have been drawn into the academic environment directly from academic studies within their discipline, or from commerce, industry and professional practice. Thus they have not had the opportunity to explore their own epistemologies. It was evident in the data that those participants who had more advanced qualifications and who were more research focussed, spoke more confidently about their fields of study and tended too to accept more individual responsibility for curriculum change. I would suggest that either before or during their employment at higher education institutions, it would be beneficial for lecturers to be exposed to educator programmes that encourage the development of insight into alternative views of knowledge in order to break the cycle of traditional pedagogy and to facilitate the implementation of outcomes-based curricula. There are currently several institutions throughout South Africa that offer Post-graduate Certificates in Higher Education. These programmes need to encourage educators to reflect on their own practice; to uncover their own personal epistemologies; to recognise the way these personal theories affect their own practice; and, if necessary, to change or refine their practice.

The enrolment of academics into educator programmes should be voluntary rather than compulsory. During my time at the institution there were suggestions that all academics should enrol in a teaching programme that explores notions of teaching and learning, and provides guidance for transformative classroom and assessment practices. Although I was initially in favour of this idea, having completed this study I am convinced that this would serve to further alienate and distress academics. I am also of the opinion that without the buy-in and involvement of all members of a workgroup, any initiative of this kind would be doomed to failure. Instead of adopting an institution-wide curriculum strategy that does not take into account the diverse

dynamics, values and assumptions about teaching and learning that exist across the institution, faculty leaders and curriculum development facilitators should invest their time and energy in identifying workgroups, and exploring and understanding the values and practices that prevail within particular groups. This would provide a starting point for negotiating and developing curriculum change strategies that have more chance of succeeding.

I would thus suggest that there are certain conditions that are essential for successful change. If we can create these conditions within our environment we will go a long way towards improving our chances of achieving successful and widespread change. One of these is to pay attention to and gain insight into the institutional cultures and the way that these cultures interact with processes of change. Undertaking widespread curriculum transformation within an institution that does not support effective change management is very difficult, if not impossible. Institutional managers, starting with the vice-chancellor, would do well to make their commitment to change visible and to provide a supportive environment that acknowledges and encourages change initiatives and successes. It is incumbent upon these leaders to engage in debate about what it means for academics and learners to be working and learning in a university of technology. The development of a strong institutional identity is possible only if academics see the benefits of changing their practice and feel valued and supported within their working environments. The lack of common understandings and goals is detrimental to transformation processes which require the commitment of those who are involved.

Above all, the institutional leaders will need to work tirelessly to gain the trust of academics and to develop ways of relating to them that inspire confidence and belief in their commitment to and support for change. While most participants in this study recognised that curriculum change was necessary, successful transformation of curricula will depend, to a large extent, on how academic leaders work with staff to build capacity and take ownership of change processes. It is only with free and open communication, clear and sensitive decision-making and an understanding of the issues and challenges facing academics that institutional leaders will develop effective strategies that lead the institution towards successful change.

## **8.5 Concluding Remarks**

In investigating academics' curriculum discourses and their implications for curriculum transformation, it has become evident that there are significant barriers to change implementation at an individual level, particularly where the institutional culture mitigates against such change or at the very least does little to foster it. My concern is that the potential for effective curriculum development is not being realised in South Africa. In institutions with good academic leadership, institutional cultures that support change and flexible organisational structures, there is more likelihood of successful curriculum transformation.

Some of the conditions necessary for change and the strategies I have suggested are longer term strategies through which new values, assumptions and norms are developed. I am acutely aware that these strategies, will pose great challenges. All the issues in curriculum transformation are only part of a broader set of issues which includes governance, management and administration. Not only will many of the structures within the institution have to change in order to suit the new system, but as we have seen, many of the values and beliefs about education and teaching that currently prevail will also have to shift. This will test the flexibility of the institution, and will require the commitment of all stakeholders within the institution. While acknowledging the constraints that exist, I remain optimistic that with a willingness to try and overcome or side step barriers to change we can work together to successfully transform curricula.

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## **Appendix A: Institutional permission to conduct research**

6 February 2006

To whom it may concern

As the Acting DVC: Academic I grant permission for Paulette Powell to gather data for her Ph.D studies from participants at this institution.

Yours faithfully

Prof D Lortan  
Acting DVC: Academic  
Durban Institute of Technology

## Appendix B: Letter of informed consent

Dear Participant

I am very grateful that you have agreed to participate in this study which is being conducted for my Ph.D. I am registered with the School of Education and Development at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and my supervisor is Dr Volker Wedekind, the Head of School. Should you wish to contact him at any stage during the project, his contact details are as follows: [wedekind@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:wedekind@ukzn.ac.za) or 033 260 6120. My co-supervisor is Dr Sioux McKenna, Acting Director of CHED at DUT. Her contact details are as follows: [smckenna@dit.ac.za](mailto:smckenna@dit.ac.za) or 031 204 2904.

The title of my project is '*A critical investigation into curriculum development discourses of academic staff at a South African University of Technology*'. Through the study I am hoping to better understand what Durban University of Technology (DUT) academic staff members mean when they talk about curriculum development and what they understand about their roles and responsibilities in the process of curriculum development. Your views will be interpreted and considered in terms of what they say about the above as well as the extent to which national, institutional, professional and student requirements influence your curriculum development views. Your responses will be treated confidentially and the issue of your anonymity will be discussed fully with you at our first meeting.

At this stage I would ask you to allow me some flexibility regarding the number of interviews I will conduct with you or the length of time each interview might take. The best indication I can give is that we will meet for recorded interviews at least twice. I will contact you well in advance to negotiate times that work for you as I am fully aware of your workload and other commitments. If possible I would also like to attend any advisory board meetings held by your department during this year, as well as any staff meetings dealing with curriculum issues. I am happy to provide you with copies of the transcripts of our conversations should you so wish.

You have been randomly selected for participation in this project, and as you are aware, you are free to withdraw from the project at any stage without any negative or undesirable consequences to you. Your participation in this project is voluntary and no payment is being made to you. Once again my grateful thanks in anticipation of your participation. Please would you sign the declaration below to acknowledge that you have read and understood the implications of your participation in this project.

### DECLARATION

I..... (full names of participant)  
hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

Signature of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Regards  
Paulette Powell

## Appendix C: Participant biography

Participant	Faculty	Years of working in industry**	Years of teaching experience*	Age range
P1	Arts & Design	8	10	35-39
P2	Arts & Design	5	26	50-54
P3	Health Sciences	6	12	35-39
P4	Engineering, Science & the Built Environment	0	8	30-34
P5	Health Sciences	8	9	40-44
P6	Commerce	3	7	30-34
P7	Commerce	0	12	45-49
P8	Health Sciences	4	19	50-54
P9	Engineering, Science & the Built Environment	3	11	35-39
P10	Health Sciences	19	8	50-54
P11	Commerce	0	5	35-39

\* The years of teaching experience were calculated backwards from 2006. They reflect the time spent in full-time higher education employment.

\*\* Although many academics have continued to work in industry on a part-time basis while being employed full-time as lecturers, the figures in this table record only their full-time industry work experience.

## Appendix D: Interview questions

As the data will be collected from semi-structured interviews with academic staff, participants will be encouraged to construct their own extended narratives of their views and experiences of curriculum development (Moore, 2003b p.85). The following questions will be used to guide me to raise particular issues with each participant.

---

DUT requires that all subjects have learner guides stating the course outcomes. What are your thoughts about this? Does the articulation of outcomes make any difference to your teaching?

What processes were involved in the development of the programme/diploma you offer? *Explore the extent to which the participant was involved in contributing to the qualification registration documents submitted to SAQA. Also explore the extent to which the qualification specification is reflected in the participant's subject outcomes and in her/his teaching and assessment practices.*

Do you think it is your responsibility to determine your subject outcomes? *Explore the processes the participant uses for determining her/his course/subject outcomes.*

How much do you know about the structure/content of other subjects within the programme? *Explore the relationship between the development/ refinement of the participant's own subject/s and the learning programme as a whole. Explore the importance placed on programme integration. Explore the degree to which subject development processes are linked with the process of developing/refining/reviewing the whole learning programme/diploma.*

What is your understanding of curriculum development? *Explore the participant's view of what a curriculum comprises and what curriculum development involves.*

.

Do you prefer to work on your own when developing your own subject/s or do you think that working as a programme group is beneficial?

Has the disbandment of the convenorship system affected in any way the way that your department develops and refines its programmes? *Explore the way the participant feels about this and her/his views of whose responsibility it is to develop the curriculum for her/his learning programme. Explore participant's view of the role she/he thinks she/he has to play in developing the curriculum for the learning programme.*

To what extent do you think that the institution's approach to curriculum development reflects/is informed by national policy? *Explore how the issue of curriculum development has been dealt with more broadly in the institution and faculty. Explore the participant's view of any policies and procedures that exist and her/his view of the institution's/faculty's approach.*

How does the national policy relating to outcomes-based education impact on your own teaching and assessment? *Explore the participant's view of OBE and its influence in higher education.*

What need does your programme/diploma respond to? How is this determined? *Explore the role that the external community, eg., commerce, industry etc has to play in curriculum development.*

Do you think the changes in curriculum development processes are advancing the education this institution offers?

What do you think are your main responsibilities as an academic in this institution? *Explore the participant's view of her/his role as an academic.*

## Appendix E: Proofreading letter

# Proofreading and Correcting

### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

This letter serves to state that I have proofread a copy of the following Dissertation/ Thesis/ Journal Article and have made suggestions to the researcher in terms of corrections which s/he may choose/choose not to put into effect in the final copy:

TITLE: *A critical investigation into curriculum development discourses of academic staff at a South African University of Technology (PhD UKZN)*

RESEARCHER: Paulette Powell

The general areas covered in this proofreading include:

- Spelling - with special reference to English UK spellings of specific words.
- Correction of grammatical errors: syntax, concord etc.
- General editing to improve the language and vocabulary used and to, where necessary, adjust to make the work more academic in tone and style.
- Comments on general layout in terms of consistency in style: bullet lists, Figure and Table headings, Chapter headings and sub-headings.
- Comments and corrections of the Reference List entries



Date: 28 October 2010

LINDA ROBINSON (MRS)  
BA (HDE Univ of Natal 1985)  
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## Appendix F: Ethical clearance

MON/JAN 25 2010 8:49/ST. 8:48/No. 7516417420 P 2



RESEARCH OFFICE (GOVAN MBEKI CENTRE)  
WESTVILLE CAMPUS  
TELEPHONE NO.: 031 - 2603587  
EMAIL: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

8 AUGUST 2006

MS. PA POWELL (781780894)  
EDUCATION

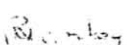
Dear Ms. Powell

**ETHICAL CLEARANCE APPROVAL NUMBER : HSS/06337A**

I wish to confirm that ethical clearance has been granted for the following project:

**"A critical investigation into curriculum development discourses of academic staff  
at a South Africa University of Technology"**

Yours faithfully

  
.....  
**MS. PHUMELELE XIMBA**  
**RESEARCH OFFICE**

PS: The following general condition is applicable to all projects that have been granted ethical clearance:

THE RELEVANT AUTHORITIES SHOULD BE CONTACTED IN ORDER TO OBTAIN THE NECESSARY APPROVAL SHOULD THE RESEARCH INVOLVE UTILIZATION OF SPACE AND/OR FACILITIES AT OTHER INSTITUTIONS/ORGANISATIONS. WHERE QUESTIONNAIRES ARE USED IN THE PROJECT, THE RESEARCHER SHOULD ENSURE THAT THE QUESTIONNAIRE INCLUDES A SECTION AT THE END WHICH SHOULD BE COMPLETED BY THE PARTICIPANT (PRIOR TO THE COMPLETION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE) INDICATING THAT HE/SHE WAS INFORMED OF THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT AND THAT THE INFORMATION GIVEN WILL BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL.

cc. Faculty Office (Post-Graduate Studies)  
cc. Supervisor (Dr. V Wedekind, Dr. S McKenna)